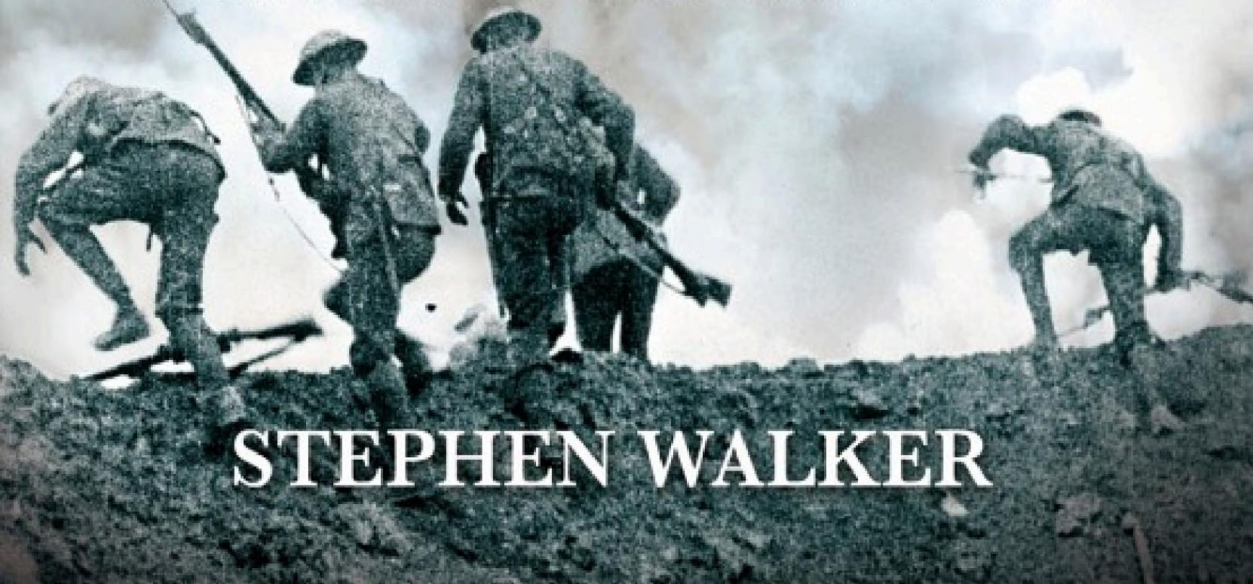
IRELAND'S CALL

IRISH SPORTING HEROES WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR



STEPHEN WALKER

IRELAND'S CALL

For my family and friends

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Irish Sporting Heroes who Fell in the Great War

STEPHEN WALKER

Pen & Sword
MILITARY

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Firstly, I would like to acknowledge all the family members of the men featured in *Ireland's Call*, who answered my questions and requests for photographs and letters. Thank you for sharing your family history with a wider audience, and I hope you feel this book has been a worthwhile endeavour.

I wanted to write the stories of the men because I felt their sporting and military lives were worth recording. I was fascinated by the fact that well-known sportsmen were often prepared to give up their careers and volunteer for war, and I wanted to understand why so many came forward to enlist.

I am particularly grateful to the relatives of Basil Maclear, and my thanks go to John Maclear Bickford, Ann Maclear Tyler and Giles Bickford. I am also grateful to Eldrith Ward, who is a relative of Harry Sloan.

During my research I received enormous help from many archivists, in particular staff at the National Archives in London and at Emory University in the United States, who supplied me with copies of Robert Gregory's family letters.

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Details of matches and sporting achievements have been supplied by archivists who are attached to schools, colleges and sporting organisations across the UK and Ireland. Many administrators and officials work in a voluntary capacity and I was often taken aback by their enthusiasm for this project.

With the exception of the GAA players those chronicled in these pages were all international sportsmen. I know my selection may generate debate and if you have any observations or extra detail about the men please feel free to contact me on Twitter @IrelandsCall15.

Over the past two years many people from a wide variety of sporting bodies have all helped me put this book together.

My journey into the world of Irish cricket began with a phone call to Robin Walsh, a former BBC Northern Ireland controller who has been a leading light in Irish cricket for many years. He put me in touch with Edward Liddle, John Boomer and Barry Chambers, who were a great help.

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previous books, much of this work was written at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan. It is a wonderful setting, and every time I go there I am bowled over by the atmosphere and the kindness of all the staff.

My family and close friends have put up with the distraction of *Ireland's Call* over the past two years, and my father, brothers, Matthew and Geoff, and sister, Kate, were very supportive. My children, Grace, Jack and Gabriel were also very tolerant when our weekends and holidays were consumed with tales of sportsmen and soldiers from a bygone age. Without the blessing, love and encouragement of my wife this project would not have seen the light of day.

I wrote this book, but Katrin made it happen.

Stephen Walker, County Down, July 2015
Twitter @IrelandsCall15

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Introduction

'THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO PLAY GAMES.'
– First World War recruitment poster

This is the story of forty Irish sportsmen who died fighting in the Great War. They were the heroes of their day, and entertained crowds in places like Lansdowne Road, Croke Park and Dalymount Park, as well as in events like the Open Championship and the London Olympics. As soldiers they saw action in the horror of the Western Front and in the carnage of Mesopotamia.

The majority were household names who came from every corner of Ireland, and the story of their lives presents a portrait of Irish society from a century ago. The worlds of sport and military brought them together, and they included rugby players, footballers, hockey players, cricketers, GAA players, athletes and a golfer. They represented the top tier of Irish sport, and had they survived they could have continued to contribute to their chosen disciplines.

All those featured in *Ireland's Call* are Irish internationals, with the exception of the three GAA players, who include two All-Ireland Finalists.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all those Irish sporting stars who served in the Great War, but it is an attempt to capture the period of the time through the extraordinary lives of some of the country's leading sportsmen who made headlines before they went into battle.

Spanning seven sporting disciplines, the men whose stories are featured here all fought in the major theatres of the Great War, and today their names are remembered on memorials across Europe and

Asia, in the Middle East and South Africa.

A large number of those who served were friends from university days, and many played together in the same teams before they enlisted. They included Robbie Smyth, who played rugby for Ireland and the British Isles team, and his brother Edmund, who represented Ireland at hockey. Three Ulstermen who were members of the Irish rugby team that beat France on New Year's Day in 1912 saw military action, each losing their lives in the Great War.

Similarly, three members of the Irish international hockey team that played Wales that year would be war casualties by 1918. Their number included Robert Morrison, an Anglican curate from Dublin, who died just weeks after he began his military service at the front.

Ireland's Call includes the stories of history-makers like Bohemians striker Harry Sloan, who was the first player to score a goal at Dalymount Park, and teenage rugby player George McAllan, the first schoolboy to be selected for Ireland. He lost his life in 1918, in the same year that golfer Michael Moran died in France. Moran was the finest Irish golfer of his generation, and the first Irishman to win prize money at the Open Championship. The list of cricketers included Frank Browning, an official with the Irish Rugby Football Union who helped to train recruits on the Lansdowne Road turf. Browning's role shows how sport and the military collided when the Great War broke out in August 1914. After an advertisement was placed in *The Irish Times*, hundreds of men, mainly from middle-class backgrounds, came forward to join a 'Pals Battalion' of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Many were rugby players, and the idea of a battalion of sportsmen was very similar to other units established in Britain. The links between sport and the military went directly to the heart of the debate about recruitment during the Great War. Recruitment posters were drawn up specifically aimed at sportsmen, and much pressure was applied to professional footballers to quit their profession and sign up for active service. The leading writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle criticised those who were reluctant to enlist, declaring that players should 'serve and march in the field of battle'. Lord Roberts, an army veteran, was particularly critical of

footballers, who were showing some reluctance to enlist, proclaiming 'this is not the time to play games'.

This quotation was later emblazoned on a recruitment poster featuring a rugby player in his team colours and in military uniform. The message got through, and soon dozens of sportsmen enlisted,the ranks of the military swelling with athletes, footballers, rugby players and cricketers.

In England, the 17th and 23rd Middlesex recruited dozens of footballers, and the 13th Rifle Brigade included a number of golfers. The 16th Royal Scots, which became known as McCrae's Battalion, included leading players from Heart of Midlothian. During the Great War sport remained an important facet of life for those involved in front-line action. Inter-regimental games and contests were organised, leading sportsmen were encouraged to take part, and the resulting rivalry was often intense. It was an opportunity to keep fit and relax for a few hours away from the horrors of battle. In April 1915, safely away from the front line, the legendary Irish rugby international Basil Maclear, whose story is told in this book, refereed a game between soldiers. The match featured top internationals from Scotland, Ireland and England, and understandably created a lot of interest amongst the troops.

On a number of memorable occasions in December 1914, Allied soldiers engaged the Germans during the much documented football matches that were part of the unofficial Christmas truce. They were extraordinary moments of human kindness, and became an enduring image of the Great War.

At the Battle of Loos in 1915, members of the London Irish Rifles played football as they advanced on German lines. In 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, soldiers from the East Surrey Regiment kicked footballs towards enemy lines. One of the footballs bore the inscription 'The Great European Cup-Tie Final: East Surrey v Bavarians'.

Seeing the war effort as one big sporting contest was a theme the British military hierarchy were keen to exploit. One poster printed in Dublin with the intention of recruiting hundreds of Irishmen

billed the war as a 'Grand International Match'. The advertisement stated that, 'Irishmen wishing to play in this – the greatest match the world has ever seen – should enter their names at once at the nearest Recruiting Office so that they may be thoroughly trained for the Great Day. Medals will be presented after the Match.'

Many of those whose stories appear here were decorated with medals for bravery, and a large number showed enormous courage and disregard for their own safety in the most appalling conditions. They showed the same leadership on the battlefield that they had first exhibited on the playing fields of Belfast, Dublin and Cork. They were family members, sportsmen and soldiers, and like the thousands of other Irishmen killed in the Great War they were denied the lives that once promised so much.

A century ago, Ireland lost a generation of sporting heroes.

This is their story.

Prologue

30 April 1915

In the Dublin sunlight the men marched out of their barracks accompanied by the band of 12th Lancers and pipers from the Officers' Training Corps of Trinity College. With their straight shoulders and swinging arms they moved in perfect step, weighed down by their kitbags and heavy packs.

Family members and well-wishers lined the route, shouting encouragement and applauding as they all marched by.

At the Four Courts, where the day's proceedings had ended, barristers, some still dressed in their gowns, spotted familiar faces and roared approval. A large crowd gathered at O'Connell Bridge, and as the procession went by, hats, handkerchiefs and scarves were thrown into the air. Occasionally, women stepped away from the pavements and thrust sweets, cigarettes and rosaries into the hands of the soldiers. There was an air of celebration, but it was tinged with a feeling of finality.

For many men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, this was their last glimpse of the city of their birth. It was emotional as they passed the offices where they had once worked, and as they marched they acknowledged the cheers. A number of soldiers tied Union Flags and the Irish Harp Flags on their bayonets, and as they raised their standards the crowd responded.

For the 'Pals Battalion', this was the final goodbye. It was a last chance for Dubliners to acknowledge their own. A year later it would all be very different, the streets echoing the sounds of armed rebellion.

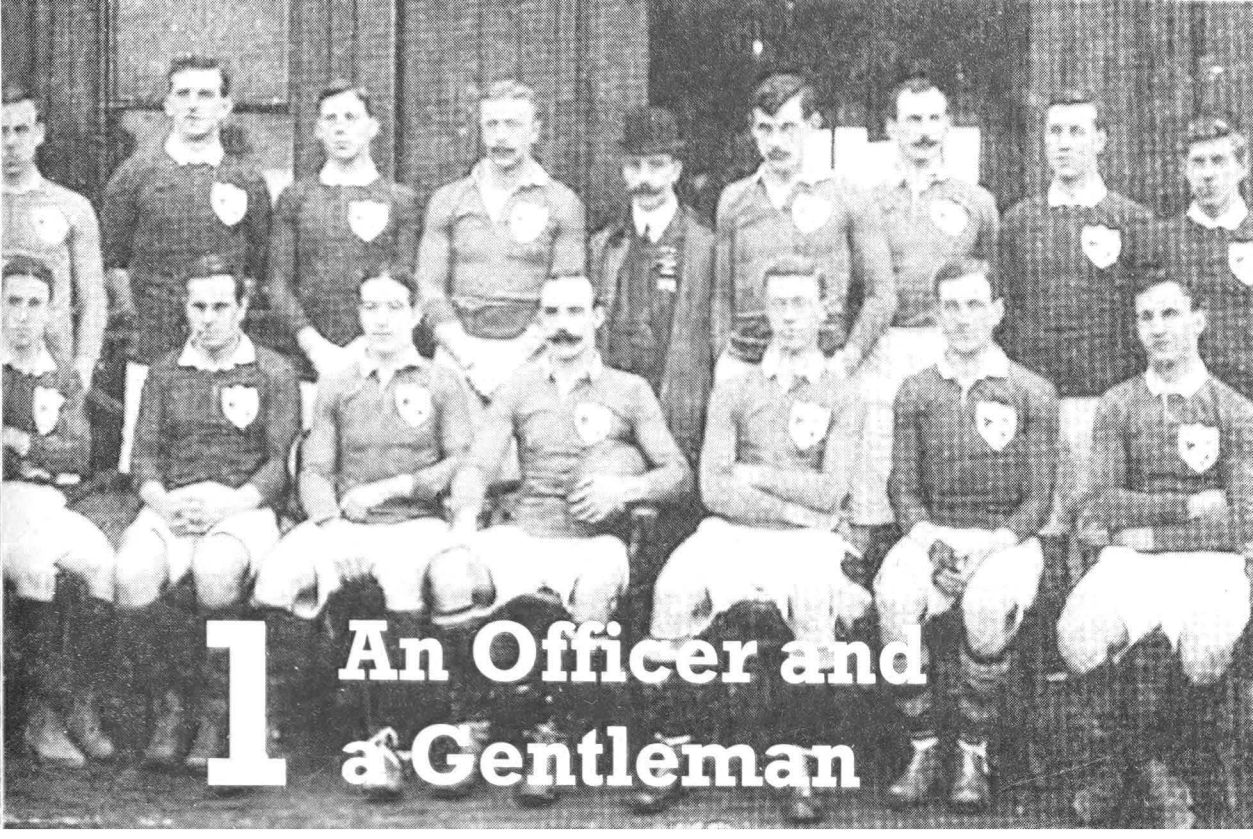
The march ended at North Wall, where a passenger steamer was docked, ready to take the men to Holyhead in Wales. After they boarded and prepared for the journey, there was one last important act before they set sail.

Frank Browning, the President of the Irish Rugby Football Union, who had been the inspiration behind their formation, was on the quayside to meet the men. They had played rugby and socialised with him, and as their friend and mentor he had recruited many into the ranks. Before they left Ireland he wanted to wish them well. It would be the last time they would ever see him. Within a year, Browning would be dead, shot during the Easter Rising of April 1916.

As the light began to disappear, Frank Browning boarded the ship, and after dozens of handshakes he said his goodbyes and wished his friends good luck. He was the last to leave the vessel, and watched as the Dubliners set sail. Within weeks they would be the target of Turkish snipers on the beaches of Gallipoli. The 7th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers contained doctors, architects, lawyers and other men, from across the city and beyond.

In peacetime many played rugby matches together, and through the camaraderie of sport became friends. When war was declared, they enlisted together and regularly practised their drills on the turf of Lansdowne Road.

Once they were teammates, but now they were comrades, heading off to war.



1 An Officer and a Gentleman

'THE GREATEST DISCOVERY IN MODERN TIMES.'

– *The Yorkshire Post* on Basil Maclear, Irish Rugby International, 1905.

As the light faded on a fine November day in Belfast in 1906, Basil Maclear was about to secure his place in Irish rugby history.

From a distance, the 25-year-old was easy to spot. He was muscular, nearly six feet tall, with a handlebar moustache, and as usual was wearing distinctive white gloves. Over the last year he had become a crowd favourite, which had begun when he scored on his debut against England and helped Ireland to secure a famous victory in Cork. That night, after the 17–3 victory, he had been the toast of Munster. Now it was Ulster's turn to see if the Maclear magic could be repeated.

As kick-off approached, around 15,000 spectators were crammed into the Balmoral Showgrounds to watch Ireland play host to South

Africa. The bumper crowd had generated takings of £800, which was a record for a rugby match in Belfast. With spectators packed behind the touchlines and squeezed together under the covered stand, every vantage point was taken. Naturally they had come to cheer on the home side, but many had travelled out of curiosity to see what these giants from the Southern Hemisphere had to offer. It was the first time anyone in Ireland had seen the visitors in action, and their inaugural trip to the British Isles and France had captured the public's imagination. The Irish match was the eighteenth game of the South Africans' tour, and they had only been beaten once. A week earlier, on a rain-sodden pitch, Scotland triumphed by 6 points to nil in Glasgow.

Such results would prove to be rare, and by the time they returned home to Cape Town they would have amassed a staggering total of 600 points in twenty-nine games, statistics that would establish them as one of the world's leading rugby nations. The historic tour would also introduce the term 'Springbok' into the language of international rugby.

In Belfast, Basil Maclear was selected to play on the wing, although he was a versatile back, and could also play as an out-half and a centre. He was known for his turn of pace, his kicking and his handling, but also for the fact that he wore white gloves, which helped him to grip the ball. He always brought two pairs to each game, and religiously changed them at half-time. The young soldier was also renowned for the way in which he 'handed off' opponents, and his technique was greatly admired.

If much was expected from Maclear, there was also a lot resting on the shoulders of another talented Irish back who had a reputation for winning games. James Cecil Parke, or JC as he was often known, was a centre from County Monaghan who had won his first Irish cap in 1903 while he was still a student at Trinity College. He was an excellent place kicker and a natural sportsman who excelled at athletics and golf. Parke had recently won a series of Irish tennis titles, and in later years would take part in the Olympics and at

Wimbledon. Parke, Maclear and the rest of the Irish team received a great reception when they ran out onto the pitch, which, despite the time of year, was in perfect condition. There were also sporting cheers for the South Africans, who had forsaken their traditional green shirts and wore their change strip of white. It was the visitors who got the game underway, and after a signal from the Scottish referee, J. D. Tulloch, the Springbok half back, Paddy Carolin, kicked off.

The opening minutes did not go well for Ireland, and the team appeared disjointed and slightly overawed. At half-time the South Africans were in control, and had established a 12–3 lead.

In the second half, Parke successfully kicked a penalty and brought the score back to 12–6, but there was little to inspire the home crowd.

Halfway through the second half the game changed when Ireland won a scrum in the shadow of their own posts. The ball was passed to the right, and as it came loose Maclear gathered it up. He could have kicked it to safety, but instead decided to run with the ball. Still in his own 25-yard line, he evaded a tackle from the South African centre, Jack Hirsh, and palmed off winger Bob Loubser. Maclear appeared to stumble, but then managed to fend off the attentions of the half back, Jackson. By now Maclear was picking up speed, and as the crowd sensed a try was possible he approached the Springbok full back, Steve Joubert, on the halfway line.

Joubert, who was making his test debut, was the tourists' last line of defence, and knew that he must halt Maclear at all costs. However, the Cork soldier was out of his reach. Maclear outpaced him, but the Springbok, who was also speedy, was determined to bring Maclear down, so he tried again, but with no luck. He gave chase to Maclear, trying for a third time to halt the Irish player. Maclear was stronger and faster, and he evaded Joubert with a strong push on his shoulders. Then, with a final burst of pace, Maclear crossed the line in a flourish and grounded the ball. He had run almost the entire length of the pitch at speed, and scored an 80-yard try. The compact arena erupted in an explosion of noise. Hats, scarves and umbrellas

were hurled skywards. The breathtaking score had lifted the gloom of the crowd, and Maclear's dramatic run would go down in history as one of the finest tries ever scored by an Irish player.

The reporter from *The Irish Times* was suitably impressed:

> It was one of those magnificent episodes which make football matches worth going to see. It raised the hopes of the Irish from the dull slough of despair to the biggest pinnacle of ambition.

From the South African kick-off, Maclear nearly repeated the trick. As the crowd continued to celebrate his try, he received the ball and ran at speed towards the South African defence. Like before, using his pace and a series of his trademark handoffs, he evaded numerous tackles. It seemed that he was about to score again, but was finally pushed into touch. From this position Ireland continued to pressurise, and moments later Harold Sugars crossed the line to level the score at 12 points all. Many in the crowd probably hoped that the full-time whistle would follow, but South Africa had a response in store. Winger Anton Stegman crossed the line for the final score of the match, which meant that South Africa won by 15 points to 12. A converted try was worth 5 points, and the narrow margin of victory ended one of the most dramatic games ever witnessed in Ireland.

As the spectators headed for their trains and trolleybuses there was much talk about what might have been. It had been a bittersweet occasion. Defeat was at least tempered by the fact that they had witnessed a moment of genius from Basil Maclear. Understandably, he was singled out for much praise by the press. One reporter wrote:

> Basil Maclear stood out as the commanding figure, and his try obtained after running three-fourths the length of the ground, would in itself have sufficed to have made the match memorable in the annals of great games.

The South African match marked Maclear's eighth International game for Ireland, and his fourth try for the national team.

His route to becoming an Irish international was not a conventional one, and had things been different he would have worn an English shirt. He was not Irish by birth, having been born in Portsmouth on 7 April 1881 to Henry and Mary Maclear. He did have some Irish blood, however, as his grandfather, Sir Thomas Maclear, the famous Astronomer Royal at the Cape Town Observatory, was born in Newtownstewart in County Tyrone.One of five brothers, Basil Maclear was educated at Bedford Grammar School, where his ability in sport first became apparent. The young student was a natural athlete and excelled at many sporting disciplines. At one sports day in 1898 he triumphed in eight different athletic events, and won prizes for hurdling and sprinting. He developed a love of cricket, which was encouraged at the school, and with his pace was a promising fast bowler. He captained the school eleven, and they remained undefeated for a season. He was also handy with the bat, and on one occasion made 133 runs. Rugby was another early love, and his talent was spotted by the London club Blackheath, which selected him when he was just fifteen. Even as a raw teenager he was viewed as 'strong and fast and a resolute tackler'.

Such was his talent that the school sent word to officials of the English Rugby Football Union, letting them know about Maclear's ability. Popular, likeable and well thought of by the teaching staff, he was made deputy head boy. Away from sport he had time for music, and was accomplished on the penny whistle, as well as being a keen actor in school productions.

As the youngest son of an army major, Basil Maclear was always destined for a career in the army, so after Bedford Grammar School he went to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. He excelled in his new surroundings, and in his spare time continued to play rugby and cricket. Quick to learn new skills, he was regarded as a model student, and on passing out in 1900 was awarded the 'Sword of Honour'.

In the summer of that year, organised county cricket was just beginning in Bedfordshire, and Maclear was chosen to play in the county team's opening game against the Surrey second eleven. The match was held at a pitch at the grammar school, so the debutant felt at home. He showed few nerves, and in his first innings knocked up a creditable score of 20 runs. He followed this in the second innings with 39 runs, which was the second highest batting score. It was an excellent county debut and sparked glowing tributes in the local press, which described his performance as 'admirable', one correspondent saying that his fielding was 'exceptionally smart'.

Maclear was nineteen years old, and was enjoying his sport. In the summer he alternated between playing cricket for his college and for Bedfordshire. In the winter he concentrated on the game of rugby, and he invariably got a match with a club team, or played with his friends at Sandhurst. He was young and fit and was enjoying life to the full. His carefree days, however, would soon come to an end.

In August 1900 life got a little more serious for the student soldier when he left the comfortable confines of Sandhurst upon being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Britain was at war in South Africa, and by December 1900 Maclear served during the Boer War. He saw action in the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State and in the Transvaal. He had established himself as a natural leader, and in 1903 was involved in battles in the hinterland of Aden. His war efforts were rewarded, and he became a lieutenant in 1904, the same year he returned to Britain.

Back in England he quickly resumed his rugby career, and turned out regularly for the Bedford and Blackheath clubs. His pace, strength and goal-kicking began to attract the attention of the press, and soon the English international selection committee decided they would watch him in action.

In January 1905 he played for Old Bedfordians against Old Paulines at Richmond. In the crowd was one of the most influential men in the game of rugby, Sir Rowland Hill. From the Rugby Football Union, he was there to see Maclear play and assess his potential. By all accounts the young soldier had a good game,

reportedly converting eleven tries and scoring two. His point-scoring extravaganza, however, did not impress Sir Rowland, who said that Maclear was 'not good enough; no opposition to test his true ability'.

His decision that Basil Maclear was not worthy of an English trial would come back to haunt the English rugby official. Maclear was playing brilliant rugby and getting great reviews, but Hill's decision appeared to have ended any chance of an international career.

By 1905 Maclear was stationed in Fermoy in County Cork with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and began playing rugby for the Cork County club. When on army duties in Dublin, he also turned out for the Monkstown rugby team.

The Irish selectors were soon made aware of Maclear's talent, and instantly knew that he would be an ideal addition to their back line. He was watched closely to see if he was of international standard, and this time the result was favourable. He got his chance in the 1905 Four Nations Championship, and with a beautiful turn of irony Basil Maclear made his Ireland debut against England.

The match in February was the first ever international to be played on a pitch at Mardyke, which was the new ground in Cork, and 12,000 spectators paid a record gate of £900. The contest captured the imagination of the sporting public and that day's *Irish Independent* printed a special feature under the headline 'Shamrock v Rose: Today's Great Struggle'. The article came complete with caricatures of the players, and Basil Maclear was featured wearing his army uniform.

The Cork ground boasted a pretty pavilion, and a new grandstand built for the occasion was packed to capacity. In front of a certain Sir Rowland Hill, the president of the Rugby Football Union who had rejected him the month before, Basil Maclear did not disappoint the home crowd. Ireland began the game in style with Maclear as the lynchpin of the Irish attack as he ran at speed, tackled well and created numerous chances. England could not cope with the pace of the Irish backs; their defence looked disorganised and at times threadbare. By half-time Ireland had scored two tries, and England had yet to score. In the second half the game followed a similar

pattern, and Ireland were in control of the ball for large passages of play.

Maclear had a point to prove, and in the final minutes he seized his opportunity. He received the ball, picked up speed, and according to one correspondent: 'ran like a fine full-blooded stag through the English back division and scored a truly magnificent try'. His effort was rewarded with huge cheers from the touchlines and, perhaps buoyed by the response of the crowd, he promptly kicked the conversion. By the final whistle, Ireland had run out winners by 17 points to 3, and they had crossed the English try line five times. It was a well-deserved victory, and Basil Maclear was the hero of the hour. The crowd singled out the new boy, and one newspaper reporter noted that he received a 'most flattering display of popular delight as to the great part he had played in the Irish team's success'.[2]

The *Yorkshire Post* declared: 'It is safe to say that not for many years has an international player made such a triumphant debut as this dashing Irish three-quarter back.' Even Sir Rowland Hill, perhaps with a tinge of regret, admitted that Maclear had, 'stamped his authority and class on the match'.

The game was difficult to watch for the English selectors, whose journey home from Cork must have seemed slow and tortuous. When they arrived back in England, the newspapers were probably best avoided. In print they were met with criticism of their selection choices, and the headlines starkly declared that England had been overwhelmed. There were fears expressed that England could end the championship without a win, and across the press there were constant mentions of the 'Englishman' that got away: Basil Maclear. The *Yorkshire Post*'s correspondent who travelled to Cork praised his 'steam engine runs', declaring that he was 'the greatest discovery in modern times and it will be a great thing for football, not in Ireland alone'.

Maclear's performance in Cork impressed so many people that it was no surprise to find him in the starting fifteen when Ireland travelled to Edinburgh a fortnight later to meet Scotland. Ireland continued their winning ways, and again Maclear was instrumental,

with a series of fine runs. Ireland won by 11 points to 5, and Maclear converted one of the tries. The victory in Scotland set up a winner-takes-all clash with Wales for the 'Triple Crown'.

On 11 March a crowd of some 40,000 packed into the ground at St Helens in Swansea. Buoyed up by wins in Cork and Edinburgh, hundreds of Irish fans took passenger boats over from Ireland to watch the game. Their number included a band from Cork who paraded through Swansea hours beforehand. Wales were the favourites to win, and, with the finest back line in the world, were a formidable side. Nevertheless, Ireland also fielded a strong team, with Maclear lined out alongside J.C. Parke and the talented backs of Landers and Thrift.

Patriotic songs, rowdy cheers and applause greeted the two teams as they ran out onto the pitch for a game that had the feel of a cup final.The conditions suited Wales, and at times 'the ground seemed much too heavy for the Irish forwards'. However, things were different for the Irish backs, and 'Maclear was the best of the Irish three quarters but he did more spoiling than running.' At half-time Wales were ahead by 10 points to 3, and despite Ireland's best efforts the scoreline didn't change in the second half. The Triple Crown belonged to the men of Wales, but the Irish camp had every reason to be pleased with the way they had performed throughout the competition. They had been runners-up to Wales, and Ireland had played some great rugby. To cap it all, the 'English reject', Basil Maclear, had been the discovery of the championship.

By the start of the summer in 1905, Maclear was an established member of the Ireland back line. Although the championship was over for another year, he would get a chance to show off his skills in the autumn when the New Zealand team arrived. In fact, Maclear was so keen to play against the visitors that he would oppose them on four occasions with four different teams, two Irish and two English.

In September, just before they arrived in England, the newspapers were full of reports about the rugby players from the 'other side of the world'. It was the first time New Zealand had toured Europe, and

journalists did not know what to expect from the men in black. What was about to happen would change the way rugby would be played. The New Zealanders had a style of their own that encouraged a free, flowing game, with forwards playing as if they were backs. They also had a distinctive scrum formation, which enabled a roving forward to disrupt the opposition. Above all, they played with passion and flair, which would be on full display during the winter months of 1905.

Their captain, Dave Gallaher, who was born in Ramelton in County Donegal in 1873, was an inspirational figure. His father ran a drapery shop, and his mother was a teacher. When Dave was just five years old, they emigrated to New Zealand. Gallaher, like Maclear, had a military background, and was a Boer War veteran who had seen action in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. A tough, quick-thinking forward, he led a team called 'The Originals', but which would become better known as 'The All Blacks', a name that was coined during their tour across Britain and Ireland.

Like Maclear, Gallaher would serve on the Western Front during the Great War. He had natural leadership qualities and often put himself in dangerous situations without thinking of his own safety. During an assault with the Auckland Regiment he was seriously injured on 4 October 1917. A shell exploded close to him, and he was taken to a makeshift hospital at a clearing station. He was given the last rites and died shortly afterwards.

Gallaher was one of the finest players ever to represent the All Blacks, and his death was felt keenly in New Zealand. After he stopped playing he became a coach and wrote a successful rugby book. He was forty-three when he died.

One of his former teammates, Ernest Booth, summed up Gallaher's philosophy:'To us All Blacks his words would often be, "Give nothing away; take no chance." '

Booth played with Gallaher back in 1905, when an exhausting thirty-two games were lined up for the New Zealanders in the British Isles, with other matches against France and British Columbia also pencilled in at the end. No one knew much about them or the kind

of rugby they played, but the assumption in the press was that British teams would easily beat them. After they sailed into Plymouth, the tour began in Devon in mid September against the county side. When the final score filtered through to newspaper offices around the country, no one could believe the result. The visitors had thumped their hosts by 55 points to 4. In fact, a number of publications credited Devon with the win, thinking the original score was a mistake. Their triumphant opening match was followed by games in Cornwall, Bristol, Northampton, Leicester and Middlesex. In those early games the tourists amassed a points tally of 176 without reply.

By now, the press started to take the New Zealanders seriously. They got respect, and because of the colour of their shirts the name of 'The All Blacks' entered the rugby vocabulary. In November, Basil Maclear got his first chance to try his luck against the men in black when his old team, Blackheath, welcomed the tourists to their London ground.

Understandably, the touchlines were packed with spectators for the biggest day in the club's history. If the locals had come to watch an upset, they would be disappointed. The New Zealanders' fine form continued, and despite the best efforts of Maclear and the other seven internationals on the Blackheath team they were no match for their dashing opponents, who scored 32 points without reply. The general consensus in the press was that the skilful men from the southern hemisphere were invincible. One correspondent reported that those who represented Blackheath had 'probably never had such a gruelling before and certainly would not like to go through such an experience again'. The reporter had obviously not met Basil Maclear, who could not get enough of playing against the visitors.

Eleven days later he turned out for his home club, Bedford, as they tried to stop the all-conquering tourists. Schools, factories and offices in the county town closed early to allow people to attend. By the kick-off, a crowd of around 8,000 gathered in the shadow of the new stand to see if Bedford could succeed where other clubs across England had failed. Any thoughts of a home win proved to be in vain

as the visitors won by an even greater margin than in the Blackheath game, finishing the match as winners by 41 points to nil.

Even though Maclear had now been on the losing side twice in recent games, the press reports for his play were favourable.

Ten days later it was Ireland's chance to do battle.

After travelling through England and Scotland, the All Blacks had played twenty-one games and won every one. Their free running and dazzling forward play had resulted in 646 points, and they had conceded a mere 22. They were the sporting wonders of their age, and no one in the press now doubted their ability. In the run-up to the match in Dublin, there was an insatiable demand for tickets. Irish Rugby Football Union officials had issued 10,000 tickets well before the game. It was the first ever all-ticket rugby international, and officials decided not to take any money at the gate. That led to tickets changing hands well above their face value, and there were reports that five pounds had been offered for a couple of five shilling stand tickets. Many hundreds turned up at the ground and could not get in. Some enterprising souls took positions on nearby buildings to get a free view of the game, and others stood outside the ground and listened to the crowd. Such was the desire to see the All Blacks that it was estimated that match organisers could have sold 20,000 tickets. In the end it would still prove to be a commercial success, with ticket sales generating around £950, which was huge amount of money at the time

In fine weather, with a perfect playing surface and a packed house, Lansdowne Road was set for a historic encounter. Dublin had never seen anything like it, and the Irish players and spectators had certainly never witnessed the pre-match Haka. As the All Blacks stood on the turf, dancing and singing Maori verses, the ground looked on in wonder. The *Cork Examiner's* reporter declared:

> The Irish team looked most foolish while this was going on, as they appeared to think they ought to do something, but they did not know exactly what. In spite of this warlike demonstration the match was played in a friendly spirit.

The Irish selectors had picked a strong team, and had chosen players who had turned out earlier in the year for the Five Nations Championship. Basil Maclear knew more about the visitors than any of his teammates. This was his third match against the All Blacks in as many weeks, so he probably knew the entire New Zealand team by name.

The game started well for Ireland, with the backs making some early runs and the forwards tackling hard. Maclear had the chance to give Ireland the lead, but his penalty fell short, much to the disappointment of the crowd.

After half an hour there was still no score, but the deadlock was finally broken by New Zealand, who went into the half-time interval leading by 5 points to nil. In the second half the New Zealanders added to their lead, and held on for a 15–0 victory. Ireland had tried hard to contain the visitors, but in the end the power of the tourists' forwards and the pace of the backs had proved too much. The All Blacks were magnanimous in victory and praised the Irish 'spirit'. Maclear, and fellow back Mossy Landers, who split his finger during the game, were picked out by the press as being two of Ireland's best performers. Maclear had little time to dwell on the defeat because the following Tuesday he was in Limerick to play his fourth and final game against the tourists.

He was chosen to captain Munster at Markets Field on a pitch that was 'rough and uneven' and very different from the manicured surface of Lansdowne Road. The press gave the Irish province little chance of beating the tourists, but such reporting did not deter nearly 4,000 spectators from making the journey to Limerick. Munster put out their strongest team possible, but there was no place for Landers, whose split finger from the game in Dublin had not healed. The match started at a fast pace, but it was clear very quickly how the game would develop as the home forwards 'went down like a house of cards before their opponents and the Munster backs were altogether outclassed'.

The game was won in the first half, the visitors running in five tries.After the break the tourists appeared to relax a little, but they

still managed three more tries, and by full-time they had scored 33 points without reply.The Munster crowd were sporting, and cheered the All Blacks off the pitch, later giving them a good reception when they boarded a train at Limerick Railway Station. Maclear was picked out by the press as one of the few Munster players who had made an impact on the game.

The *Cork Examiner*'s reporter wrote:

> Maclear stood by himself amongst the backs, and the way he tackled two and sometimes three men in succession, over and over again, saved many scores. None of the others were class enough for their opponents and certainly never to get green caps.

The watching journalists were not alone in appreciating Maclear's skill and work rate. The New Zealanders knew that without the Cork soldier in their ranks Munster would have been a much poorer side. George Smith, one of the All Blacks' three-quarters, summed up how the visitors viewed his ability when he told reporters, 'It is a treat to play against such men.' The New Zealand party left the platform at Limerick Railway Station to the sound of cheers, and their officials received £50 as their share of the gate money.

It was clear that the All Blacks had enjoyed their time in Ireland. Full back Billy Wallace said, 'The best time I had personally on the whole tour was in Ireland. The Dublin people gave us a great reception'.

From Ireland, the tourists travelled onto England, and would remain unbeaten until the middle of December. They lost to Wales in Cardiff by 3 points to nil in disputed circumstances after the All Blacks had a try disallowed.

The tour changed the way rugby was viewed, and the team made a profound impact on the watching public. With the trip nearly complete, the British press started to change its opinion, and the accomplished tourists were being talked about as rugby greats. A report in the *Edinburgh Evening News* was typical:

> Had the New Zealanders dropped from the clouds they could scarcely have created a greater sensation in the world of sport, and yet many indications of their prowess might have prepared us for their coming.

In 1906, after the excitement of the All Blacks' tour, Basil Maclear settled down to play club rugby and concentrate on the forthcoming Four Nations Championship. In February he was selected for a match against England at Welford Road in Leicester. In recent years Ireland had maintained the upper hand over the 'old rivals', and in the last nine matches had won on six occasions. Maclear's fine game in Cork the year before was still fresh in the memory, and he wanted to repeat that performance. Ireland's line-up included familiar faces, and once again Maclear was joined by the likes of Harry Thrift, J.C. Parke, Tommy Caddell and Bill Brooke Purdon.

Copying tactics they had observed from the All Blacks, Ireland played with only seven forwards instead of the traditional eight. The new technique worked against a weakened English team. The Irish backs saw a lot of the ball, and made the most of the first half on a pitch that was cutting up due to the rain. After eighteen minutes Purdon broke the deadlock, scoring a try under the posts. Then, on the half-hour mark, Tommy Caddell got the ball and passed to Maclear, who scored in the corner. He failed to convert, and at half-time Ireland were 8–0 up. In the second half the conditions had deteriorated, and the pitch was now in a 'wretched state'.[3] England fought back with a couple of tries, but two Irish goals gave them the advantage, and for the second year running Ireland triumphed. Basil Maclear had contributed 7 points which meant that Ireland won by 16 points to 6.

The new technique of playing with just seven forwards was tried again by Ireland in their next match with Scotland in Dublin two weeks later. It proved to be a disaster, the Scots winning well by 13 points to 6.

The result led to much discussion amongst the players about the tactic of only playing with seven forwards. As a result, by the time the Ireland team assembled in Belfast's Balmoral Showgrounds for the Wales game, the old method of playing with eight forwards had been reinstated. Wales had already beaten England and Scotland, so they travelled across the Irish Sea in the knowledge that a win would once again seal the Triple Crown. In the first half the Irish forwards, back in their traditional eight-man formation, were superb. In the back line, J. C. Parke and Harry Thrift were also in top form. Disaster struck just before half-time when Irish back Bill Brooke Purdon had to be taken off with a broken leg. Ireland were leading by 8 points to 3.

In the second half things got worse when Tommy Caddell left the field with a broken ankle, so Ireland played the final ten minutes with thirteen men. If anything, the loss of another player galvanised the home team. Basil Maclear, wearing his customary white gloves, grabbed the ball, and with pace charged over the Welsh line. At full-time Ireland had beaten Wales by 11 points to 6. The result was all the more impressive because Ireland had played large parts of the game missing two key players. Those watching at the show grounds certainly believed that they had witnessed one of the finest Irish performances of all time. The Rugby writer E.H. D. Sewell described it as 'the greatest of all wins in international or any rugby'.

Eight months later, in November, Basil Maclear, playing some of the finest rugby of his career, would return to Belfast for the infamous South Africa match. The game would once again excite and enthral in equal measure, and was the occasion when he would produce his, and arguably Ireland's, finest ever try, demonstrating how essential he was to the Irish team.

1907 marked Maclear's final season in an Irish jersey, and he was once again on the winning side when England visited Dublin for the start of the international championship. A 17 points to 4 victory set Ireland on their way, but an away defeat in Scotland put paid to any talk of Triple Crown success.

Maclear joined the Irish team in Cardiff in March for his final game. It seems that his participation in the match was in doubt, as

some newspaper reports suggested that he may have been injured. Despite such fears he played in the game, but it was not one of his better performances. He did have two exciting runs in the game, but they didn't lead to tries. In the first half he picked up pace and used his trademark handoffs to keep several Welsh players at bay. He was eventually brought down inside the home team's 25-yard line. In the second half he had another sprint, but this time it ended after he passed forwards. Wales made much of their chances, and in the second half took a commanding lead with a number of tries. One reporter summed up Maclear's final contribution:

> Basil Maclear, who has won games for his country before today, was for once in a way faulty and it was in vain that he tried to get in some of his telling runs.

With Wales leading by 29 points to nil, the game came to a close, and so did Basil Maclear's eleven-game international career.

He continued to play club rugby, and the next month was selected for the Barbarians as part of their Easter tour. In early April he played for the invitation side at Exeter, and his old form returned as they beat the home side by 18 points to 3.

Family matters took precedence in August when one of his four brothers, Ronald, got married back in the family's home town of Bedford. Like Basil, he was a keen rugby player and played for a number of clubs, although he never made it to international level. Just like his younger brother, he too had joined the army and was a lieutenant with the 5th Middlesex Regiment.

A knee injury ultimately ended Basil's rugby career, but he continued to play hockey and cricket, and two years after he finished playing international rugby he was still playing county cricket for Bedfordshire.

Away from sport, he had much to occupy his time. He was very busy with army life in Ireland, and continued to serve with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. In 1912 he returned to England and the familiar surroundings of Sandhurst as a member of staff at the Royal Military

College. He was appointed an Inspector of Physical Training, an ideal job for a man with his interests and background.

For the next two years, until 1914, he kept an eye on the recruits. When war was declared in August, Basil Maclear must have known that it was only a matter of time before everything would change, and he would find himself in front-line action. Within days, the horrors of war hit home when news arrived that his older brother, Percy, who was attached to the West African Frontier Force, had been killed in the Cameroons. He was the first of three Maclear brothers to die in the Great War. In October 1914, from his room at the Royal Military College in Camberley, Basil wrote to his brother Arthur about Percy's death.Like the other Maclear brothers, Arthur was also in service, and was a member of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry.Basil had received some information about Percy's death from the Colonial Office, and asked Arthur to keep the details confidential.It seems that the family was originally hoping that Percy had survived a gun battle, but the statement from the Colonial Office ended those thoughts. Basil wrote to Arthur, after receiving official confirmation, that 'I am afraid we can hope no more'. Basil described Percy as 'one of the best fellows in the world.' After Basil wrote to Arthur, he then sent a similar letter to his other brother, Ronnie, giving him the same details he had received about Percy's death.

As the war progressed, it became obvious that Basil Maclear's leadership skills were needed on the battlefield rather than on the training ground. In February 1915 he left Sandhurst to become a captain in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, where he prepared for active service on the Western Front.

He arrived in Belgium in March, and was put in charge of the reserve company of the battalion, which was preparing the ground for what would become the Second Battle of Ypres. The fighting was intense, and within days Basil Maclear was at the front line, directing his men and leading attacks on enemy trenches. When a break came and he withdrew behind the lines for some rest, rugby was very often on his mind. In mid April he was in Nieppe, and was asked to referee a game between the 48th Division and the 4th Division. It was a fun

occasion, and many of the players were household names from Scotland, Ireland and England. They included famous internationals like Ireland's Billy Tyrell and England's Ronald Poulton- Palmer, who would be killed shortly afterwards.

For Maclear, it must have been an enjoyable distraction to spend some time in the company of rugby men and forget about the trenches for an hour or two. Sadly, it was only a temporary respite.

Later that month; back in the front line, Maclear and his troops came under sustained heavy fire from the Germans over a four-day period. According to official reports, when the enemy attacked he showed 'great coolness and knowledge'. For his bravery and leadership during that time he would later be Mentioned in Despatches, but Maclear would never hear about that recognition.

On 24 May 1915, in the early hours of the morning, he was with his battalion at Wieltje near Ypres when the Germans launched a gas attack and then opened fire on the British trenches. Maclear helped to organise the defence of the British positions, but the Germans were able to capture some of the British trenches very quickly, and the Dublins experienced heavy losses. It became clear that the British lines were going to be overrun if they did not get reinforcements. There was continued fighting at an area known as Mouse Trap Farm, which was held and then lost by the British. The situation reached crisis point, and Maclear sent a message back: 'Very many of our men are surrounded, we must have reinforcements.'

One of his comrades got another message back to the headquarters of the battalion, which was just as dramatic. It read: 'For God's sake send us some help. We are nearly done.' Another officer sent a note to the headquarters of the 10th Infantry Brigade, which had similar sentiments: 'Reinforce or all is lost.'

As soon as the Germans advanced it became too late for reinforcements; they seized crucial ground and killed many within the ranks of the Dublin Fusiliers.As Maclear attempted to repel the attackers he led a bombing party and hurled hand grenades towards the advancing Germans. As he faced the enemy he was heard to shout, 'Come on! Do you want some more?' He was then shot in the

throat and fell down. One fellow soldier, Gerald Tarleton, recalled: 'I saw Basil shot in the throat or near there and instantly topple over to the ground where he bled profusely'.

Another of Maclear's men, Lieutenant W. Shanks, explained how Basil was hit in the neck and chest and 'died almost immediately and said nothing'. He said that Basil had died 'fighting, very bravely indeed, not thinking of his own safety but inspiring the men with his energy and courage'.

Lieutenant Shanks said that he tried to bandage Basil Maclear's wounds, but they were too severe and he was unable to retrieve any of his possessions. However, he said he was able to get a piece of a trench mirror that Basil used, and he promised to forward it on to the family.

Basil Maclear's death shocked his battalion and devastated his mother, who was still grieving the loss nine months earlier of her son Percy. Mrs Maclear received many letters from men who had been under her son's command, and she was sent comforting words of support from his superior officers. Whilst it was common practice for relatives to receive notes of sympathy from comrades, the volume of correspondence and the language used in the letters indicates how highly Basil Maclear was regarded.

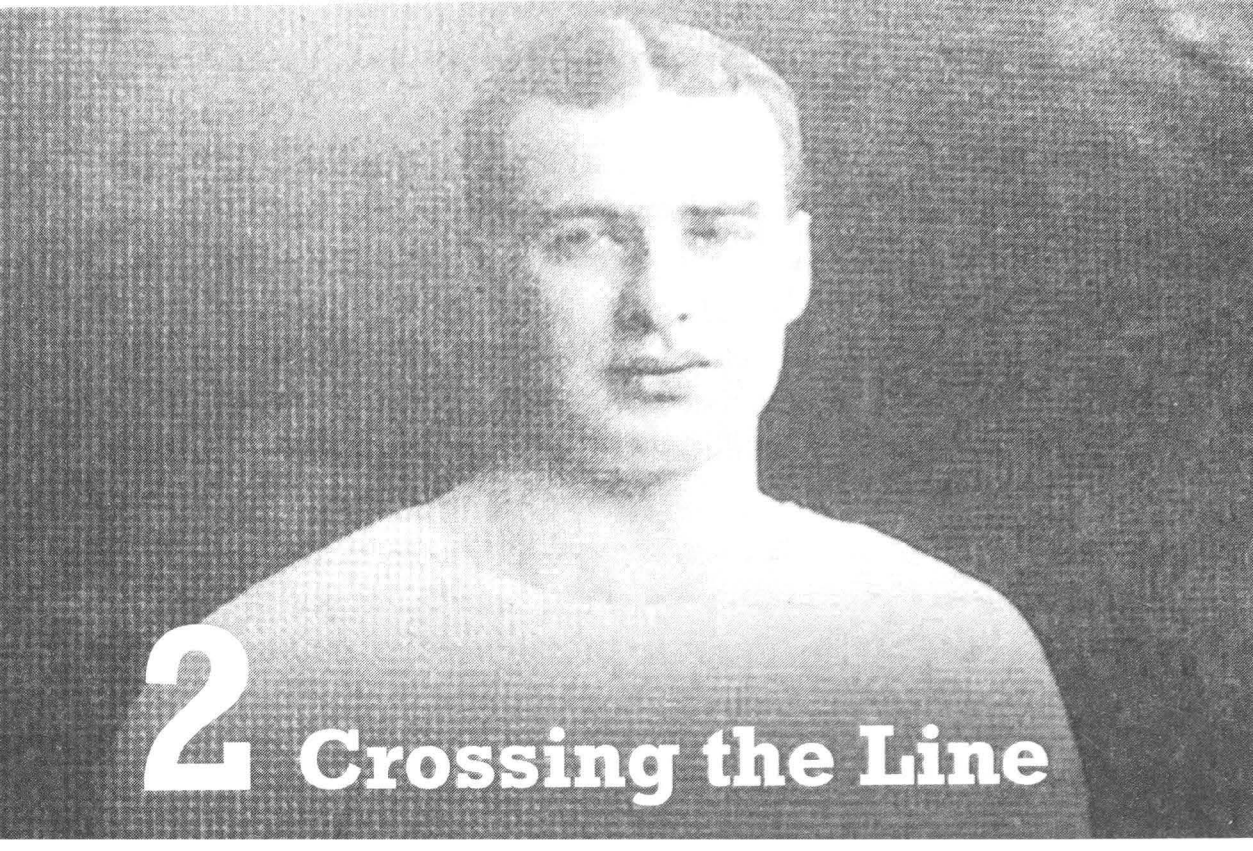
The commandant in charge of the Royal Military College in Sandhurst when Basil Maclear was there was William Sapper, who wrote that Maclear was 'the best of examples to young would-be officers'. He also stated that Basil Maclear was 'upright, a man amongst men, leading a noble blameless life. He was worshipped by the cadets'. He ended his letter to Mrs Maclear by quoting a Latin phrase that would be made famous by the war poet Wilfred Owen. Sapper wrote, '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*', which translates as 'It is a sweet and honourable thing to die for one's country'. Mrs Maclear also received sympathy from officials of the Irish Rugby Football Union, who said he was one of Ireland's 'most brilliant players, a thorough sportsman and a fine gentleman'.

Maclear's death was reported extensively in newspapers across Britain and Ireland, and many fulsome tributes were paid to one of

the finest rugby players of his generation. His body was never recovered, and today, like many thousands of other servicemen who died in the fields of Flanders, his name is inscribed on the Menin Gate, which is a memorial to the 'Missing'.

Basil Maclear's contribution to Irish international rugby, which stretched from his debut in 1905 to his final game in 1907, was immense, and he was the most talented member of the squad. If he were a player in today's professional game he would be viewed as a national and international sporting celebrity, his every performance would probably be the subject of hours of broadcasting analysis, and he would attract many column inches in the written press.He was one of the game's early superstars, and his style of play and the coverage that followed added to rugby's growing appeal and popularity.

Every sport, whether it is rugby, football, GAA or hockey, needs characters, and those with an unusual backstory add to the colour and drama of the game. Maclear's curriculum vitae does not read like that of a traditional Irish sporting hero. After all, he was born in Portsmouth, educated in Bedford, and was rejected by English rugby selectors. Yet this background did not deter Irish rugby fans from accepting him as one of their own.In Bedford, in Sandhurst and at the headquarters of Irish rugby, he is remembered as a schoolboy, a soldier and a sportsman, a talented wing three-quarter who on a November day in Belfast outran the South Africans and scored one of Ireland's greatest ever tries.



2 Crossing the Line

'A MAGNIFICENT SPECIMEN OF AN ATHLETE.'

– *The Cork Weekly Examiner* on Paddy Roche, Irish Olympian, 1907.

Wearing a white vest that accentuated his powerful frame, Paddy Roche stood on the cinder track and waited. His time was about to come. He stretched his limbs, and alongside him runners from Canada, the United States of America and Holland did the same.It was a pre-race routine that the Irishman was used to, but never in these circumstances. The crowd, the noise and the occasion were like no other he had ever experienced. Ireland's finest sprinter was about to perform on the greatest stage in the world.

Suddenly, the competitors were called forward. They nervously took their positions at the starting line and waited for the crack of the pistol shot. When the race began Paddy Roche kicked out, pushed his legs, and as his heart thundered against his chest he found his stride. He pushed again using the power of his thighs, and

propelled himself forwards as his arms cut through the air.

The 200 metre heat was all over in seconds, and the London crowd whistled, cheered and shouted in their thousands. On a summer's day in the White City Stadium they watched as Roche, a 22-year-old from Cork, secured a place in the semi-final of the Olympic Games. It was a remarkable performance and marked the pinnacle of the young athlete's sporting life. As he walked around the arena and acknowledged the applause he knew he was within touching distance of winning a medal.

An All-Ireland athletic champion, an Irish international and an Olympian, he was one of the most gifted sportsmen to emerge from Ireland in the twentieth century. Yet, over a hundred years on, he remains largely hidden from the history of Irish sport, a forgotten figure whose life was prematurely taken. His story is all the more remarkable because his athletic prowess was discovered by chance, and as an athlete he carried his talent easily and modestly.

Patrick Joseph Roche was born in 1886 and lived with his parents William and Ellen Roche in Cork. Known all his life simply as Paddy, he was a very active child who enjoyed the outdoor life, and like young boys of his age he had his share of accidents. One day he fell from a horse and badly damaged his left arm, an injury that would stay with him all his life. This did not stop him from enjoying most sports, particularly Gaelic football.Tall, and with powerful legs, he had a great turn of pace and was easily the fastest runner amongst his peers. While he was still at school and playing Gaelic football for a local team he was spotted and encouraged to join Knockrea Athletic Club. The club had a nationwide reputation for producing good athletes, and their runners would often dominate race meetings across Munster. Officials from the club wanted to see how fast young Roche could run, so one evening in 1905 they tempted him away from playing Gaelic football and organised a trial race.

The teenager was pitted against Paddy Kavanagh, who had originally spotted Roche's potential when he watched him play Gaelic football as a half-forward. A student at Queen's College in Cork (University College Cork), Kavanagh was an experienced

runner and the captain of the Knockrea club. The challenge was supervised by Jim Connolly, who was another stalwart of the club, and he, like his friend Paddy Kavanagh, was keen to see what kind of speed Roche could reach.To compensate for Roche's age and lack of experience, he was given a few yards' head start since it was expected that Kavanagh, as the more seasoned runner, would have the measure of him.To startled onlookers, Roche outpaced his older rival and won the race well.

A second race was then organised, but this time the rules were slightly different. Watching club officials were now aware that Roche was at least a match for, or even faster than Kavanagh, so it was agreed that both runners would start at the same place.In the second race Roche outran his older rival and triumphed again. As the small crowd took in what they had witnessed, Jim Connolly and Paddy Kavanagh both realised that they had an athletic sensation on their hands. Paddy Roche became an established member of the Knockrea Athletic Club, and he was very quickly tested against other runners from across Ireland. A series of victories followed in local race meetings, and his easy-going style on and off the track won him many admirers.

In July 1906, in fine weather in front of a large crowd at the GAA championships in Cork, he ran in his Knockrea vest in the 100-yard and 220-yard events. He won both races handsomely, and *The Irish Times* observed that Roche was 'one of the most promising youngsters we have seen in years'.

He enrolled as an engineering student at Queen's College Cork in 1906, and as he was keen to advance his running career he had a difficult job balancing his studies with training.The student athlete was given great encouragement from friends and family to continue his running, even though he was still learning the sport. He was persuaded in 1907 to enter the Irish Amateur Athletic Association championships in Dublin.

Roche made the journey up to the athletic meeting in Ballsbridge with a small band of supporters, including his younger brother, Dick. Feeling confident after his easy wins in the GAA championships the

previous year, Paddy Roche was hopeful that he could repeat the trick in Dublin. By this time Paddy Roche had changed physically, and as the *Cork Weekly Examiner* would recall in fulsome praise, he had 'blossomed into a magnificent specimen of an athlete'. The newspaper described him as standing well over six feet tall with a 'wonderful depth of chest over good loins'. The correspondent added for good measure that 'his limbs were so beautifully straight and graceful that he looked a picture'.

However, he faced strong opposition from Denis and Willie Murray, who were both outstanding runners. These two brothers were amongst the finest competitors in Ireland; Denis was the reigning and six times 100-yard and 200-yard champion, and Willie had recently returned from winning a prestigious tournament in England. In the first race, the 100-yard event, Paddy Roche swept past the Murray brothers and crossed the line first to the cheers of his family and friends.

In his next competition, which was the furlong race, Roche once again found himself up against Denis and Willie Murray. In the early stages very little divided the runners. As Roche came up to the final left-handed bend, he took a wide position and overtook Willie Murray. The move surprised Denis Murray, who gasped as Roche, in his traditional red shirt with the distinctive 'K' marking, moved into the lead. As Roche took pole position, his schoolboy brother, Dick, shouted excitedly from the sidelines, 'Come on, Paddy, boy Paddy was never bate, come on!' Paddy Roche held his lead and crossed the finishing line a yard and half ahead of Willie Murray.

Paddy Roche, his brother and supporters returned to Munster overjoyed. The boy from Cork was now a double national champion, and great opportunities were about to come his way.

The year 1907 also marked his international debut. On the last Saturday in June he competed in the annual contest between Ireland and Scotland. Roche travelled to the event held at the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, the home of Glasgow Rangers. If he was nervous about his first appearance in Irish colours he kept such feelings well hidden.

He entered the 100-yard race, and came first. He ran the distance

in 10.4 seconds, finishing a good yard ahead of his nearest opponent. In the 220-yard race he did not disappoint his watching teammates. He again triumphed with an impressive time of 22.8 seconds, 5 yards ahead of his closest rival. Ireland won by six events to Scotland's five. Roche's success was picked up by the watching journalists, who noted that he won both races 'rather easily'. His style of running and his pace caught the eye of both reporters and the officials from the Irish team. In June 1908 he returned to Dublin to defend his 100-yard title. In front of a large and enthusiastic crowd, which included Dublin's Lord Mayor Joseph Patrick Nannetti and Lady Mayoress, Roche proved that he was not prepared to relinquish his crown, and he won the 100-yard championship easily.

A month later he again swapped his Knockrea vest for an Irish one as he crossed the Irish Sea for the fourteenth annual contest between the athletes of Ireland and Scotland, which took place at Edinburgh's Saughton Exhibition Grounds. Conditions were dull, but a sizeable crowd of 8,000 turned up to watch proceedings. For Paddy Roche, the event was very important. He was undoubtedly keen to repeat his success of the previous year, but he also wanted to put in a good performance ahead of the London Olympics, which were due to start within days. In Edinburgh he was again selected for two events, the 100-yard race and the 220-yard sprints. He won the 100-yard contests with a time of 10.6 seconds, and was a good yard ahead of his nearest rival. In the longer event he was a little slower than the previous year, and was pushed into second place by a yard. It was a successful afternoon for the Irish squad, and when the results came in from all the track and field events Ireland had won by 8 points to 3.

Nine days later, Paddy Roche was in London to compete in the most important race of his life. The 1908 Olympic Games were not meant to have been hosted in London, and were initially planned to take place in the city of Rome. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906, however, meant that resources were needed to rebuild homes, and the Italian authorities felt they could not fund the Games, so an alternative venue was needed. With just two years to go, the

International Olympic Committee approached Lord Desborough, William Henry Grenfell, the chairman of the British Olympic Association, to see if London could host the Games. Desborough, who was very keen on the idea, got the support of King Edward VII, and then accepted the offer from the Olympic authorities. In 1906, despite the short timeframe, preparations began to host the Games in England, and a new 66,000 capacity stadium was built at White City.

The Games, which began in April 1908 and lasted for six months, were surrounded by controversy. At the opening ceremony the United States team refused to lower their flag as they passed King Edward, who was in the royal enclosure. Concerns were also raised by Finnish competitors when they were asked to march behind the flag of Tsarist Russia.When the competitions finally got underway, the Americans lodged a series of complaints about the way in which the rules were being interpreted, querying a number of decisions taken by officials.

On 20 July 1908, Paddy Roche competed for Great Britain and Ireland, and wearing his white running vest he took to the track in the White City Stadium for the 100-metre heats. In front of a supportive, noisy crowd, Roche knew what he had to do, and those familiar with his achievements were hoping for great things.

The Cork man was expected to qualify, and with a time of 11.4 seconds he came home first. The next day's 100-metre semi-final was a much tougher affair, and in fine weather he took his place at the starting line. He was up against two Americans, William Wyman 'Willie' May and Lester Stevens, and a South African, Reggie Walker. The race did not go well, and Roche struggled to keep up with his rivals. Walker, the eventual Gold medallist, showed great pace, and in the final forty metres pulled away to win the race pretty comfortably. Roche was pushed into third place by Willie May, which meant that he was out of that particular championship. He had little time to deal with his disappointment and had no opportunity to dwell on what went wrong.

On the same day he took part in the heats of the 200 metres.

Roche knew that only the winners qualify for the next round, so the pressure was on him to perform well. This was his final opportunity to make an impact at the world's biggest sporting event. He was up against athletes from Holland, Canada and the United States, but he finished strongly, securing a good time of 22.8 seconds. It meant that he could progress to the semi-final, thus keeping his chances of an Olympic medal alive. Four semi-final heats were planned for the following day, with the winner of each heat going through to the 200-metre final. Roche was placed in the fourth heat, which included George Hawkins, who was also running for Great Britain. Hawkins was an accomplished athlete, and he got off to a great start. In the final seconds he narrowly beat Paddy Roche, and as Roche crossed the finishing post he fell over. He was down and out, and the fall on the White City track ended any thoughts of an Olympic medal.

Despite the controversy over the opening ceremony and arguments over the interpretation of the rules, the London Games were deemed to be a success. Lessons were learned by the Olympic hierarchy. In future Games standard international rules were applied, and judges and competition officials were appointed from an international pool rather than being appointed from the host nation.

The Olympic experience in London did little to diminish Roche's desire to run at international level, and he continued to train and take part in competitions, both local and national.

On the last Monday in May in 1909, he returned to Dublin to take part in the Irish Amateur Athletic Association championships, in which he won his third consecutive title as champion in the 100-yards event, but he was placed second to William Murray in the 220-yard race. In 1910 he was selected to represent Ireland in the annual contest against Scotland at the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow.

He completed his two specialised disciplines of the 100 yards and 200 yards with mixed results. In the 100-yard event he sneaked home by inches into first place, but in the 220-yards he was pushed into third place, a good four yards behind the runner-up.

He graduated from University College Cork with an engineering degree, after which he applied to join the Indian Civil Service. When

the Great War began he served with the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, and also with the 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners. He was awarded a Military Cross for showing exceptional courage on active service.

Paddy Roche's final days were spent in Baghdad, in what was then referred to as Mesopotamia. The city of Baghdad was the headquarters of the Turkish Army, which finally fell to Anglo-Indian troops in March 1917. While stationed there Paddy Roche contracted typhoid. The condition proved fatal, and on 25 August 1917 he died.

When the news of his death reached home, it naturally made headlines across the country. The *Freeman's Journal* in August 1917 stated that his death would be received with 'poignant regret'. Irish athletics lost a giant when Paddy Roche died, and it is clear that his passing was felt well beyond the confines of the city of Cork.

It was his running style and easy manner that made Paddy Roche stand out from other athletes. He ran effortlessly, which was a feature that the *Cork Weekly Examiner* picked up on when it profiled him. The paper's correspondent wrote:

> The strange thing about P.J. Roche was that, in racing parlance, he never 'sprinted' – he 'ran'. He never seemed to be doing his best, so easy did it all come to him. A fall from a horse when a boy left him with a badly damaged left arm, which made him a slow starter in races. Had he been blessed with the full use of this arm in springing off, and had he the full advantage of American training methods, he would have no superior in his time.

In August 1917 Paddy Roche, Ireland's Olympian, was buried in the Baghdad North Gate War Cemetery, which is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Just over 4,000 casualties of the Great War are commemorated in the cemetery, and there are nearly 3,000 unidentified burials. They include men who died from

bullets and shells and from heatstroke and cholera as they battled in the dust to wrest Baghdad from the Ottoman Empire.

Coincidentally, Paddy Roche is not the only Irish athlete to be buried there. Close to his headstone is the grave of William Hedley Craig, who appears in war records as Hedley William Craig, He was a sportsman and a soldier who was killed four months before Paddy Roche died. Craig, like Roche, was a talented athlete who represented Ireland in track events. He was the son of the late Thomas Craig, who lived at Novara House in Bray in County Wicklow, and the late Eliza Craig, who resided in Kenmare, in Orwell Park in County Dublin.Born in Bray on 10 January 1890, his early schooling was at Aravon and St Stephen's Green schools, and then on to Trinity College in Dublin.

It was at university that Craig excelled at athletics, and he became a leading member of the Dublin University Harriers. His specialism was the 880-yards event. His college performances began to get him noticed and in 1910 , 1911 and 1912 he was placed 2nd in the 880 yard Irish Championships and 3rd in the mile in 1911.

In 1911 he was selected to represent Ireland in the annual match against Scotland in Dublin and he came a respectable 3rd in the 880 yards event. Scotland won the match by 7 wins to Ireland's 4.

In June 1912 he was selected to run for Dublin University in the inter-varsity championships in Cork.Eight events took place at the newly acquired football grounds of University College Cork at The Mardyke, whose facilities were much admired. The championships should have taken place two days earlier, but constant rain and thunderstorms made the athletic track unusable.

Trinity faced opposition from University College Cork, University College Dublin, and Queen's University Belfast. The weather was mixed, and began brightly, but by the afternoon the students were subjected to a series of downpours. The band of the Yorkshire Light Infantry entertained the crowd, and their presence caused controversy. Afterwards, some officials from Cork GAA criticised the university for subsidising 'anti-national games', and the presence of a military band was also questioned. It was suggested by some

GAA officials that 'there were civilian bands in Cork at least quite as good'.

Away from athletics and his studies, Craig served as the Ireland Secretary for the Boy Scouts Association, and as Superintendent of the Fishamble Street Mission in Dublin. A man of strong faith, it is believed that he was about to undertake a divinity course just before the war broke out, so he may have been considering a future in the Church. He wasted little time in volunteering, and in September 1914 joined the Royal Engineers as a corporal. When he enlisted he asked to be considered for a role with the Signals Division, and in October 1914, he joined the Signals GHQ.

In January 1916 he got a temporary commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. His war service then took him to Basra, where he arrived in June 1916. Six months later he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. On 8 April 1917 he qualified as a flying officer, but his time in the skies would only last a matter of days. He was reported missing ten days later, and was then reported killed in action.

The precise nature of how he died is unclear, as no details are contained on his army file in the archives in London. However, the documents do reveal that at his burial German and Turkish officers were in attendance, which suggests that he was killed behind enemy lines. The archives also reveal that his grave was marked by a propeller blade. The ceremony was described as 'most impressive'.

Craig's relatives back in Ireland were informed of his death, and his possessions and outstanding army pay were forwarded on to them.

The former Trinity College student was 27 years of age when he died. Today, he lies in a cemetery in Iraq in a place that bears the names of long-forgotten regiments who fought to free the city from the grip of Turkish forces.

Nine months before Craig died, thousands of Irishmen battled the Turkish army in a different theatre of war. In August 1915 in the waters of the Aegean, the hospital ship HMS *Gloucester Castle* was packed with men who were wounded, dead or dying. It was the final

resting place of many young Irishmen before they were buried at sea.

On 16 August 1915, two bodies lay amongst the dozens being cared for by nursing staff. Their war was over. They were brothers in peacetime and comrades in battle. The story of the siblings from County Wicklow is one of the saddest accounts to emerge from the Gallipoli campaign.

Three young men from the same family left Dublin to go to fight the Turkish forces, and only one returned. The two brothers who did not come back died in the same place on the same day.

George Grant Duggan and his brother John Rowswell Duggan lost their lives on a summer's day on the Turkish coastline. Their youngest sibling, George Chester Duggan, who also witnessed the carnage, survived the conflict, and returned home to the safety of Ireland. Their family story is a tale of military service, death and heartbreak.

It begins with George Grant Duggan, a talented international athlete who enjoyed long-distance running and cross-country competitions. His love of athletics came to the fore as he studied for a Bachelor of Arts degree at Trinity College in Dublin. Born in 1886, he was the son of George and Emilie Duggan, from Ferney near Greystones in County Wicklow. George senior was the manager of the Provincial Bank in Dublin. He sent his son George Grant to be educated at the high school in Dublin and then he entered Dublin University. It appears that life at Trinity College for the young student was rarely dull, and George Grant Duggan filled his time with athletics and studying.

When he was not in the lecture room or in the library he could be found running across laneways and around the playing fields at College Park. He developed a passion for cross-country competitions, organised college races and took a lead role in the management of the Dublin University Athletic Union. His success in race meetings at Trinity led to wider recognition. On 26 March 1908 he represented Ireland the International Cross Country Championship at the Stade de Matin, Colombes near Paris.

Eleven athletes from Ireland made the trip, competing against

their French hosts, England, Scotland and Wales. George Grant Duggan took part in the 16km cross-country event and ran it in fifty-seven minutes, and was placed forty-ninth. The race was won by an Englishman, Arthur Robertson, who finished the course in just over fifty minutes.

In 1908 he graduated from Trinity College and began working with the Irish Lights Commissioners, and at this time he was also a member of the university's Officer Training Corps (OTC). Duggan was one of the original members of the OTC. He was made a corporal in 1910, and immersed himself in the activities of the Training Corps, which he clearly enjoyed. Such was his attitude that he and a number of other cadets were selected to attend the Coronation of King Edward VII. George Grant Duggan may have got his love of the military life from his grandfather, Colonel Charles Coote Grant, who was in the Bedfordshire Regiment. His passion for military adventure was shared by his brother John Rowswell Duggan, who was eight years younger than George, and also became a member of the OTC. John, like George, had a great love of the outdoor life, and was a keen marksman, often winning trophies for his rifle shooting.

After he graduated, George Duggan's personal life changed when he married Dorothy Isabella Tuthill in a ceremony at Christ Church in Dublin in August 1910. They had two children and, keeping up the family tradition, they named their first son, who was born in 1911, George. A year later their second son, Dermot, was born.

That same year George Duggan received a commission as an officer with the Training Corps, and in February 1913 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. Whilst the military exercises took up much of his evening and weekend work, he also devoted much of his time to the Boy Scouts. He was a Scoutmaster of the 6th County Dublin Troop, and served on committees for the County Dublin Association and the Sea Scouts.

By 1914, George Duggan was becoming more involved in the work of the Training Corps, attending the School of Musketry at Hythe, and was later given a platoon to command. When the war

broke out in the August of 1914, it was only natural that George Grant Duggan and his brother John volunteered for service. George Grant Duggan joined the 5th Battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and his two other brothers, John and George Chester, joined the Royal Irish Regiment. George Grant was commissioned as a lieutenant, and he was quickly promoted to the temporary rank of captain in October 1914. For the next few months he was involved in training, and by the summer of 1915 he and his brother were ready to do battle with Turkish forces in the Gallipoli Peninsula.

In July 1915, as part of the 10th Irish Division, George Grant, John and George Chester set sail to take part in a battle that would have devastating consequences. The journey to the Aegean Sea took a number of weeks, and the objective was to establish a foothold on the peninsula and push the Turkish forces back towards Constantinople and force them to surrender. The invasion by British and Commonwealth troops had been ordered after two British ships were sunk, and other ships came under attack, from Turkish forts along the peninsula. In April 1915, thousands of Australian and New Zealand soldiers (Anzacs) were joined by French and British troops. The attack they mounted on Turkish soil was a bloody failure; thousands were killed in the water before they reached the shore, and the attacks did little to push the Turkish forces back.

Keen to find a new way to attack the Turkish coastline, the British high command came up with the plan of surrounding an area to the north of where the Anzacs and the British had attacked in April. The new plan revolved around an area called Suvla Bay, and the aim was to land forces by boat and then push the Turkish forces inland. Desperate to keep their plans watertight, only a handful of senior British officers were aware of the precise nature of the plan. As the men of the 10th Division sailed to their destination, they had no idea what to expect.

As they approached Suvla Bay, men from the Royal Irish Fusiliers were placed on a number of boats, one called *Honeysuckle* and the other *Snaefell*, which was named after the highest mountain on the Isle of Man. As they came closer to the coastline the men could hear

the sound of gunfire, and they all knew that their disembarkation was imminent.

Nothing could have prepared the Duggan brothers for what they were about to experience, which one Gallipoli veteran would later describe as a nightmare. After the war, Captain G.W. Geddes, who served with the Royal Munster Fusiliers, reflected on his days fighting the Turkish forces:

> Hell it has been, with a vengeance, and the men who were at Mons and La Bassée say it was child's play to what we've gone through here.

The Duggan boys survived the landing, but in the next few days of fighting they witnessed carnage on a grand scale as many of their comrades were struck down by Turkish bullets. Bodies lay where they fell, some on the shore, some on the hillside. The beaches and the mountain paths were stained with blood.

The combat was severe, and as the men of the 10th Irish Division tried to advance inland, the casualty list mounted. During a lull in the fighting George Grant made time to go and find his brother, and the two men shared some precious time together. As the Turkish guns briefly remained silent the two Duggan brothers chatted and discussed how they had survived the past few days. They had witnessed death on a scale they could not have imagined.

John wrote home, detailing their conversation.He said that after the early fighting George was 'the only Captain left in his regiment', and that despite the awful conditions George was remaining upbeat, 'certainly looking splendid and cheery'.

George Grant Duggan survived for ten days, and on 16 August he was severely wounded in an area known as the ridge, which overlooked the bay. The ridge was Kiretch Tepe Ridge, which was held by the Turkish forces and was a stretch of mountain that towered over the sea. The Turkish soldiers had the advantage of being on higher ground and had greater firepower, so as the hours rolled on the British casualties mounted.

Now fighting for his life, George Grant was placed on board the hospital ship the *Gloucester Castle*, but his injuries were so severe that he died later that day.

By a twist of fate, John Duggan died on the same day as his brother. The younger Duggan brother was initially injured in his left wrist and had a shrapnel injury to his face and side. He was advised to go to the hospital ship, but said that since his men were without an officer he wanted to rejoin them. He had his wounds dressed, and then returned to his comrades, who were in the firing line. Shortly afterwards, John Duggan was hit in the face by a bullet and died.

One of his colleagues, Sergeant P.J. Nolan, would later write to his father and say that, 'Your son could have saved his own life, but he was always good to his men and he died encouraging them to fight till the last.' On 16 August, George Duggan was taken from the hospital ship the *Gloucester Castle* and buried at sea. It would take some time before George Grant Duggan's death would be officially reported, and in the confusion and mayhem of the ongoing operation at Gallipoli it seems that lines of communication got crossed.

On 4 September 1915, a telegraph arrived at the Dublin home of George Grant Duggan's wife, Dorothy. The message informed her that her husband 'was wounded on 16 August'. It also stated that 'further details will be wired when received'. Unsure as to whether her husband was alive or dead, she replied to the War Office asking for more information. She was told by officials in London that 'enquiries are being made'.

For Dorothy Duggan, the delay must have been agonising. Like so many military wives in her position, all she could do was wait for the next telegraph and pray that it was good news. In Dublin, as she tried to carry on with her life as best she could, the War Office sent a message to British staff based in Cairo to try and ascertain whether George Duggan was dead or alive. The news came back that he had been placed on a hospital ship and died on the same day. Intriguingly, it seems that one of George's brothers was informed that George had died just hours before he was in fact killed. The military

file in the archives in London does not make it clear which brother was informed of George's death. It seems most likely to have been George Chester as John was injured that day.

Finally, on 6 September, another telegraph arrived at the Duggan home informing Mrs Duggan that George's brother had 'secured a cable' stating that George was put on board the hospital ship the *Gloucester Castle* at Suvla Bay, and he had been 'shot in the neck and died the same day'.

The Duggan family were heartbroken, but more bad news was to follow.

Eventually,it was confirmed that the two Duggan boys had died in Gallipoli on the same day. It was a double heartache for the family to take. The boys' father, George, received a letter from the Earl of Granard, the colonel of John's regiment. He wrote:

> I am sorry to tell you that your son has been missing since 16 August. He went with his company into action on that date, and we have not seen him since. I have enquired from several of the men of his company and they all tell me he was wounded whilst gallantly leading his men. I sincerely hope that he is a prisoner. It is a consolation to know that the Turks treat their prisoners with the greatest consideration.
>
> [...] I have now soldiered for a great many years and can honestly say that I never came across a better subaltern; and as regards his social qualifications he was beloved by all ranks of the regiment.

A fellow soldier was given the difficult task of writing to John Duggan's girlfriend back in Ireland. He told her, 'I am afraid I only have the worst possible news. Jack (John) Duggan is reported killed.' Dorothy Duggan, George Grant's wife, had to bring up her two children alone, and in the weeks after her husband's death she had much correspondence and administration to deal with. There was a

series of army payments to apply for, including a gratuity payment and her husband's pension, and she also had to organise the return of his possessions. His belongings were sent back home, and they included a copy of the New Testament that he had carried into battle.

George Chester Duggan survived the war and returned to Ireland scarred by the memory of his Turkish experiences. The sounds and scenes from the Aegean cliffs were so firmly lodged in his memory that he could not forget them.

Like so many who witnessed the carnage, he could not get the bloody events of 1915 out of his head. He had watched his friends die and had lost his brothers – his two dearest friends. He must have wrestled with the horror of battle for years, and finally decided to put his thoughts and emotions on paper.

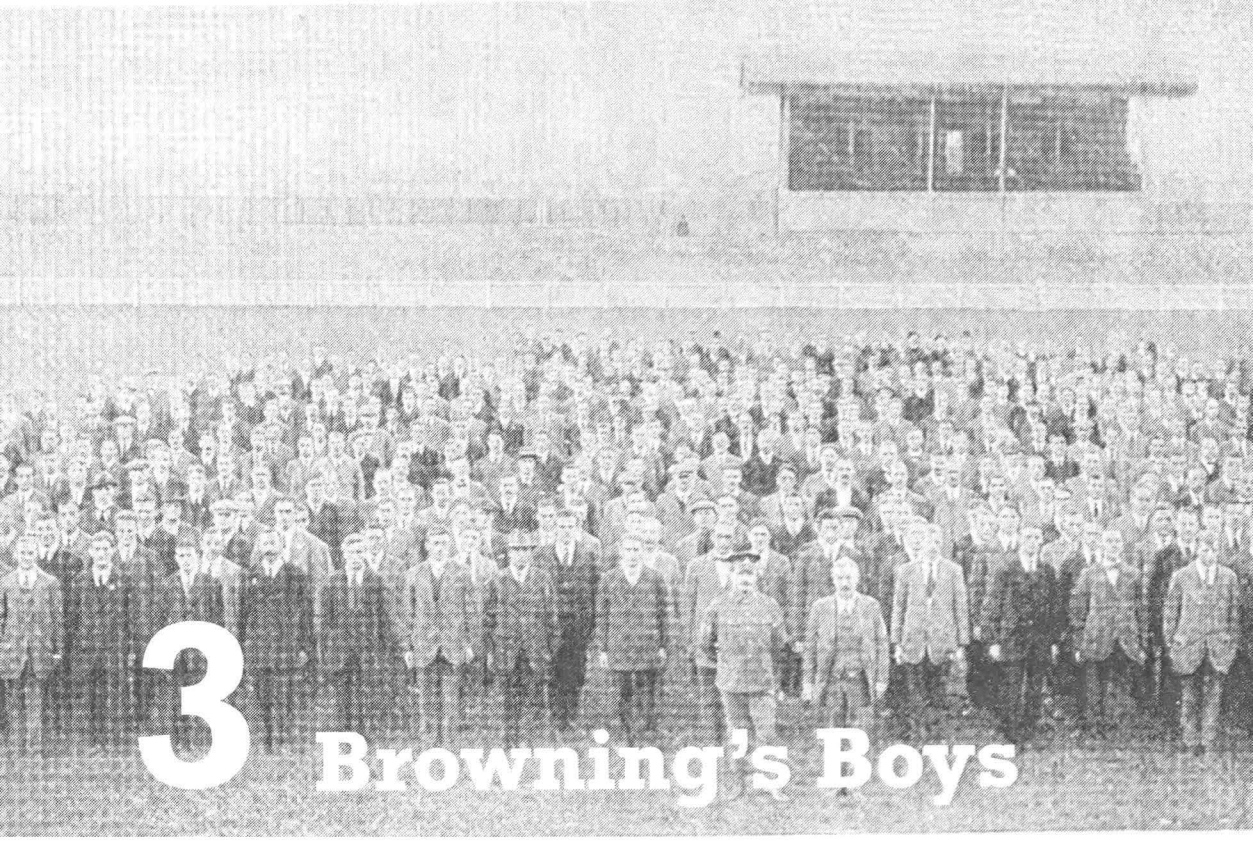
In 1921 George Chester wrote a volume of poems dedicated to George Grant and John. It was a very public attempt to capture the ghastliness of war, but also to keep alive the memory of the two men he had loved. In one final poem entitled 'The Watchers on Gallipoli', he wrote the poignant line, 'March away, my brothers, softly march away.'

The Duggan family paid a heavy price for the military service of George Grant and John, and the actions of the two men were not forgotten by their friends. Their names appear one after the other on an inscription on the Great War Memorial at Trinity College, where they both studied.They are also remembered at the Dublin High School and for their contribution to the scouting movement in Ireland.

Both men have their place in the history of sport at Trinity College. John's rifle-shooting prowess is well documented, and he is remembered as a fine marksman.He was awarded a number of cups, including a *Daily Express* trophy and the Adjutant's Cup from the Officer Training Corps. He also achieved the highest score amongst junior marksman in Leinster schools in 1912. His brother George Grant is still viewed at Trinity College as one of the best long-distance runners ever to emerge from student ranks.

Many families were torn apart during the Great War, but what makes the Duggan story particularly poignant is the fact that George Grant and John were in the same theatre of war and lost their lives on the same day.

They were brothers who played together as children and who died together as men.



3 Browning's Boys

'An honourable comrade and distinguished sportsman.'

– Tribute to Frank Browning, cricketer and rugby official

On Easter Monday 1916, Frank Browning and his men spent much of their time doing what they enjoyed best. For hours they were in the County Dublin countryside on military exercises, completely unaware of the dramatic events unfolding in the Irish capital and elsewhere. As they marched in uniform in the April air, surrounded by the trappings of Empire, a few miles away hundreds of armed rebels were swearing allegiance to a different flag and pledging to fight for Irish freedom.

Browning's charges were not regular soldiers destined to fight in a foreign land, but older men, whose age and poor fitness meant that they were not needed for overseas military service. Instead, the volunteers spent their time on home soil, marching and drilling well

away from the sound of enemy gunfire. The corps was an original 'Dad's Army', and helped to recruit thousands of young men into the regular armed services. They wore a distinctive outfit, and their khaki uniforms displayed red armbands with the initials 'G.R.', which stood for '*Georgius Rex*', the Latin for 'King George'. However, the men became victims of Dublin humour and were better known as the 'Gorgeous Wrecks'.

Aged forty-seven, Francis, or Frank as he was better known, was deemed too old for service at the front, but he played a vital role in personally recruiting hundreds of sportsmen into the services. Many young men who excelled on the sports field and later went into battle only did so because of Browning's influence. His career and his life are essential to the story of Irish sportsmen in the Great War.

A barrister by profession, Frank Henry Browning was born in June 1868 in Kingstown, and came from an Anglo-Irish family whose roots were in County Limerick. At the outbreak of the Great War he established the Volunteer Corps, and many of his recruits would move into the Royal Dublin Fusiliers to form a 'Pals Battalion' made up of rugby players from across Ireland.

As Browning and his men made their way back into Dublin after their day on manoeuvres, word reached them that large parts of the city centre had been taken over by armed rebels.Around 1,600 men from the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizens Army had seized key buildings across Dublin. A proclamation for a new Irish Republic declaring that Ireland should be free from British rule was issued at the General Post Office, and shortly afterwards fighting broke out.

When the volunteer corps from the IRFU reached the inner city, not far from the familiar surroundings of Lansdowne Road, Browning's men decided to split up. One half of the group went down Shelbourne Road towards the Beggar's Bush barracks, whilst Browning took a section of his men down Northumberland Road.

It is not clear what Browning intended to do with his men, who had no ammunition, but it is abundantly clear that he had no indication of what was to follow. As he led his men down the road, four pairs of eyes were tracking their movements. They belonged to

armed rebels Jim Grace and Michael Malone and teenagers Paddy Byrne and Michael Rowe, who had taken over a house on the corner of Haddington Road.

As Browning walked forward in front of his men, Grace and Malone tracked his movements and then opened fire. Seconds later a bullet pierced Browning's head, and he slumped forward with blood pouring from the wound. His comrades scattered in all directions, with some taking shelter close to trees and walls and near the steps of houses. The bullets continued to fly, and when the shooting finally stopped a doctor arrived to help take the dying and wounded into nearby houses. Bleeding profusely, Frank Browning was initially taken to Beggar's Bush barracks, and was then moved to a hospital in Baggot Street. There was little that nursing staff could do because his injuries were so severe, and two days later he died. He was one of five members of the volunteer corps to die that day, and thirteen of his comrades were also injured.

The Rising took everyone by surprise, particularly the men of the volunteer corps. They were puzzled, and also angry. Whilst they had volunteered to fight at home, they had not anticipated being fired at by their own countrymen on the streets of Dublin, and the attack on an unarmed group of soldiers did little to engender support for the rebels' cause. When Padraig Pearse, one of the Rising's leaders, heard of the shooting, he ordered that in future unarmed men should not be attacked.

The shooting of Frank Browning and his men appears to have been a mistake. Caught up in the drama and emotion of the time, his killers were clearly unaware that they were firing on a group of unarmed volunteers, and most likely mistook the men for regular British soldiers. In their attempt to secure Irish freedom, Jim Grace and Michael Malone had killed one of the most successful recruiters the British Army ever had in Ireland. They had also executed one of the most influential and well-respected sporting figures in Ireland.

Frank Browning loved the camaraderie of sport, and also had a great sense of duty, and within days of the war breaking out in August 1914 he became involved in encouraging rugby players to

enlist.He sent circulars to all the Dublin rugby clubs calling on players to join up, he founded the volunteer corps and organised regular drilling practice on the pitch at Lansdowne Road.He was responsible for around 300 men, mainly from middle-class families, joining up, and he counted many of them as personal friends. They were well educated and articulate, and often came from the worlds of medicine, business and the law. Browning knew many of them through his connections with rugby and cricket, and he used that sporting bond to convince many to join up together with their teammates.

The official minute book stored at the archives of the Irish Rugby Football Union gives an insight into the work that Browning undertook to train men in the volunteer corps.

A memo dated 21 December 1914 shows he had secured a drill hall at Martin's Riding School on Lower Pembroke Street in Dublin. Browning writes that 'drills will be held there on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 8 o'clock p.m, commencing (to-morrow) Tuesday, 22nd inst.'

Browning makes it clear that there will be little time to enjoy the Christmas festivities and the memo advises that 'a field day will be held on St Stephen's Day the 26th December'. He instructs his recruits to 'fall in at the Tramway Terminus at Rathfarnham at 10-30 a.m. sharp.' The men are also reminded to 'bring their own rations'. The minute book gives details of how the volunteer corps was organised and it also records how the killing of Francis Browning in 1916 was viewed by his comrades. Days after his death, IRFU volunteer corp members wrote that Browning's work would have a 'lasting benefit on his country' and they noted that 'his memory will always be revered by members of the corps'.

His death rocked the IRFU, and robbed the organisation, of which he had been president, of one its most distinguished supporters and administrators.

Browning was buried in Dublin at Dean's Grange Cemetery, and his colleagues at the IRFU erected a headstone, which praised him as an:

> ...honourable comrade and distinguished sportsman, who by his untiring efforts and splendid patriotism obtained from his corps over three hundred recruits for His Majesty's Forces during the Great European War.

Although Browning was associated with rugby in his later life, it was a different sport that had dominated much of his forty-seven years.

Cricket was his first love, and he began playing the game seriously when he was a student at Marlborough College in Wiltshire. Early reports indicate that his technique needed some refining and he was viewed as 'not a strong bat', while another observer commented that he 'often sacrifices his wicket in an attempt to hit square leg'.

A short, well-built man with strong arms, Browning was a natural wicketkeeper, and sought out this position at school and at university. He became a regular member of the first eleven at Trinity College in Dublin, and quickly got a reputation as a batsman of some note. Wisden refers to him being an 'excellent wicketkeeper and an effective bat with a pretty style'.

His efforts behind the stumps and his adventurous batting style were rewarded when he was selected for Ireland, and he made his debut in August 1888 against Scotland. The weather at Rathmines was 'delightful', and a large crowd gathered to watch the match, which Scotland won by five wickets.

Browning's performances continued to catch the eye of the selectors, and his run rate for the university team was exceptional. In 1889 he hit nearly 900 runs in a season, which included two centuries. He was now a player in demand, and the following season was asked to play against a team selected by the famous W. G. Grace. His good form continued when he chalked up a half-century, a score that he equalled against a Cambridge eleven. Ireland repeated their visits to England in the next few years, and Browning would be a regular in games against sides like Oxford, Essex, Warwickshire and the MCC.

Cricket was now becoming an international sport, and in 1904 Ireland played host to the South Africans. In the run-up to the match in Cork there had been lots of rain, but when the two sides took to the field the sun shone and the playing conditions were good. Browning played one of his best games in Irish colours, and made a good first innings score of 40 following it up with 31 runs in the second innings. Irish bowler T.C. Ross was sensational, and took nine South African wickets for just 28 runs. His accuracy secured a famous Irish victory, Browning's team winning by 93 runs. The news travelled widely, and the next day's newspapers made pleasant reading for the Irish players as they scanned headlines that simply declared 'The Colonials Beaten'.

The following year the Australians arrived on Irish soil, and Browning was asked to play against the tourists for a Dublin University team made up of current and former students. One of his teammates was Joseph Lynch, a right-handed batsman and medium bowler who was a commissioned officer with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Lynch was much younger than Browning, and although he had just recently come into the university team he was viewed as a very able cricketer.The university side performed heroically, and Frank Browning scored 52 runs in the first innings and 54 in the second, making him Ireland's top scorer in the match. His new teammate, Joseph Lynch, took four wickets, although it was at the expense of 113 runs. Ireland fought valiantly, but they were not a match for the talented visitors, who won by 231 runs. One correspondent remarked that the contest had been predictable, and that 'as had been expected the Australians experienced no difficulty'.

It was a great occasion for Lynch to play against the touring Australians, but he would have to wait a further four years before he would get a call up to play for Ireland.

1905 marked a dramatic year for the young man from South Dublin as he joined the army and became a 2nd lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers. Born in Monkstown in 1880, he was one of three children, and was educated at the renowned Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare. School provided young Lynch with many

sporting opportunities. As well as cricket, he played golf at Killiney, he sailed from the Royal Irish Yacht Club, and like many other servicemen he turned out regularly for Monkstown Rugby Club.

After becoming a commissioned officer he was posted to India, so his sporting opportunities in Ireland were limited and he disappeared from the Irish cricketing scene for a number of years. In contrast, Browning's international career flourished, and he made further appearances behind the stumps for Ireland, and even captained the side.

In August 1908 at College Park in Dublin, Ireland played host to a team from Philadelphia, and over a series of days played two matches. Frank Browning was selected to play in both games, and the Irish team had mixed fortunes.

In the opening match Browning scored 13 runs in his first innings, and he fared poorly in his second innings, with a knock of just 6. Ireland were torn apart by the bowling of Bart King, who took seven wickets for just 23 runs. The home side was well beaten, and Philadelphia triumphed by an innings and 7 runs. Frank Browning and his teammates had little time to dwell on the nature of their defeat, as the next game with the visitors began straight away. This time Ireland performed much better, and Browning was one of the star players with an impressive innings of 50 runs, which marked his highest ever score for his country. In the second innings he took a couple of catches, and the match was a draw.

Browning's fine batting performance saved the game, and his work was rewarded when he was named as captain for Ireland's 1909 tour of North America. The planned trip also provided good news for Joseph Lynch. Back in Ireland, and freed from soldiering duties, the young South Dubliner was once again playing cricket, and in a surprise move Browning selected his old university teammate for the tour.

Lynch and Browning travelled across the Atlantic and headed for Staten Island, where they faced an 'All New York' team in September 1909. Ireland were victorious in the opening encounter, Browning chalking up a respectable 30 runs.Joseph Lynch did not get a chance

to bat in the first innings, and did not score in the second, but it did not matter as Ireland's bowlers proved too strong for the home side. Further games followed with a Philadelphia side, but this time the Irish batting was poor, and great bowling by Bart King and 'Ranji' Hordern put paid to any thoughts of another victory. In truth, the Irish side was weak, and contained players like Frank Browning, who were now at the end of their careers. Browning managed only 7 runs in the Philadelphia games, and to most observers it was clear that his days as Irish captain were coming to an end. At the time of the American trip he was forty-one years old, and had played for Ireland off and on for over twenty years.

Although his wicket keeping was regarded as good, his batting in a number of the tour games had been poor, and it was apparent that he was past his best. The trip across the Atlantic ended his international cricket career and that of Joseph Lynch, whose time in Irish colours was regrettably brief. Had he not gone overseas with the army in 1905, it is likely he would have enjoyed more international games.

Invalided home after contracting a fever, Joseph Lynch probably thought his army career was over as well, but his love of the military was rekindled in 1914 when the war broke out. He did not return to the Royal Irish Fusiliers, which was his old regiment; instead, he enlisted with the 10th Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment.

By September 1914, Lynch was back in uniform again and began battle training in a series of camps across England. He was highly regarded by his comrades, his leadership skills impressed those in the battalion's hierarchy, and in April 1915 he was made a captain.

A year after he enlisted his opportunity to fight in France arrived, and in September 1915 he crossed the English Channel and landed in Boulogne ready to go into battle.Lynch and his comrades were on their way to take part in what would become known as the Battle of Loos, which was named after a small mining village in France. The British attack was being planned in conjunction with French forces, and on 25 September, the opening day of the battle, Lynch and his men arrived in the front-line trenches.

The offensive became significant in the history of the Great War because at that time it marked the biggest land battle in which British troops had ever been involved. The attack also saw the debut of new army divisions, and the first use by the British Army of poison gas. After a long march, Lynch and his men finally arrived at the front, where they joined soldiers from the 18th London Regiment. According to his comrades he was in good spirits, despite the fact that he was probably exhausted after a long march, and like everyone else he was most certainly frightened. Being an officer, Lynch was under instructions to disguise any fear, knowing that such emotions could be counterproductive. At the front line the conditions were awful. There was barbed wire and mud everywhere, the trenches were flooded and it was raining. The attack at Loos was controversial because some in the British Army high command had reservations about the purpose of the offensive, which had been discussed at length by the French and British military hierarchy. Douglas Haig, who would later become commander-in-chief of the British Army, had carried out a personal reconnaissance of the Loos battlefield in June 1915, and concluded that the terrain was 'not favourable'. He also felt that the enemy were well positioned, and remarked that there were 'very carefully sited' German defences. His worries about the strength of the Germans and concerns about the terrain would later turn out to be well founded.

Joseph Lynch probably got sight of the German defences within minutes of arriving at the British front line. As dusk fell he was on the move, and he and his men passed troops who had taken part in earlier attacks on the Germans. His first objective was to capture Loos, and just before he got to the village he received a flesh wound to his wrist. He was hurt and bleeding, and although the wound was not fatal it needed to be dressed, which would have required him to retrace his steps to a first-aid station. As an officer, however, the Dubliner was determined to stay with his men, so he refused to have his arm treated, instead carrying on into battle. He wanted to continue the attack and offer support and leadership to his comrades.

Lynch and his men from the Yorkshire Regiment were now close to Hill 70, and the men tried to gain ground by advancing in short, sharp rushes. As they moved forwards, Lynch was hit by a bullet, which went straight through his head over his left eye. He fell at the base of the hill, and was comforted by a doctor from the East Yorkshire Regiment. The medic could do little to help. Lynch never spoke, and died very quickly. His body lay on the ground for some time, and later that night it was recovered by soldiers from the 10th Hussars.

Whilst the Battle of Loos did result in some ground being gained, it proved difficult to exploit any successes because of problems with getting replacement troops to the front line. Ultimately, the battle would prove to be very costly, 43,000 men losing their lives.

Many telegrams were sent out from London in the days that followed.

One arrived at the Lynch family home in Monkstown in early October, and ended with the traditional statement: 'Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.' The words informing the family of Joseph's death were simple and sparse, and were contained on just three lines, yet the words generated a multitude of questions. The family wanted to know how Joseph had died, and wondered if he had suffered and where he was buried. Joseph's father, Michael, wrote: 'Please say by whom and where this officer is buried?'

Michael Lynch was informed that Joseph was buried near Loos, and was also given a map reference. His mother, Annie, wrote another letter to the War Office seeking information about what marked her son's grave. The War Office informed her that wooden crosses were inscribed and placed on all the graves, which had been carefully registered.

In February 1915, Michael Lynch wrote to London, desperately hoping that his son's belongings had been found. For obvious sentimental reasons he particularly wanted the return of his son's watch, a ring and some field glasses. A month later he got a reply stating that it was with 'regret' that the items could not be found. Joseph Lynch's possessions could not be traced, and it soon became

clear that neither could his body. It seems likely that if he was buried his final resting place was dislodged because of the ongoing battle surrounding Hill 70. The battle for territory meant that Lynch's body had been scattered, or was buried in an area now unrecognisable after a series of explosions.

Today, in the National Archives in Kew in London, it is possible to find Joseph Lynch's army file, which chronicles his military career and details his family's pain. Tucked away in the paperwork, which is a century old, a typewritten line starkly reads, 'There is no record of this officer's body having been recovered.' Death brought heartache and uncertainty, and produced many questions with very few answers. The Lynch family solicitor, H.W. Franck of Dawson Street in Dublin, became a regular correspondent with the military authorities in London. Aged thirty-four, Joseph was a bachelor and died intestate, so his financial affairs needed to be sorted out. Eventually, money that was part of his army pay was forwarded to the Lynch home. It amounted to just over £100, which the solicitor described as 'trifling', adding that it would benefit Joseph's father, who was 'not a wealthy man'.

Other letters arrived in the Lynch household from Joseph's battalion, which gave details of his last days and hours. J. Bernard Marshall, a padre with the 62nd Brigade, told Joseph's parents that he had strong faith. He wrote:

> It is needless for me to tell you that he was a fine Catholic. [...] Sunday by Sunday he led his men to Mass – a thing that many Catholic officers shirk – and I know that his constancy was a value to the men. They all spoke highly of him. [...] Although I could not bury your son, I have not forgotten to offer Mass for him and remember him at the altar.

Joseph Lynch was not the only friend of Frank Browning to die close to Hill 70 in those awful days of September 1915. The day before Lynch was killed by a German sniper, fellow Irish cricket

international James Ryan died as the British forces surged forward in an attempt to seize enemy territory.

Ryan, a 23-year-old, was a Northamptonshire lad. As well as playing for his native county, he made one appearance for Ireland against South Africa in 1912. He was born in the village of Roade on 15 September 1892 to Walter Henry and Alice Mary Ryan. His Irish parents were well off, and his father was a well-known physician and surgeon. Brought up in the Catholic faith, Walter and Alice sent their young son to Downside, a prestigious Catholic school near Bath, and there, as well as studying, he immersed himself in his love of sport. He was a very good all-rounder who excelled at many team games including hockey, athletics and football. It was at cricket where Ryan would make his mark and he was best known as a medium fast bowler, and also a talented right-handed batsman.

Aged eighteen in 1910, he left Downside and joined the army, and over the next few years would combine military training with his desire to play cricket. His talent with the bat and ball were quickly spotted by the cricketing authorities, and as a teenager in 1911 he made his debut for Northamptonshire.His career in first-class cricket was spasmodic and stretched over three years, but it was largely uneventful. During his time in county colours he managed just four wickets, and in fifteen innings chalked up 119 runs, with his highest score being 41.

During Ryan's training days at Aldershot and Sandhurst, he once again excelled at sport as an impressive cricketer and footballer. He was a fast runner with a great turn of pace, and represented the army at athletics, winning the officers' half-mile at the army athletic meeting.His military and academic curriculum vitae shows what kind of character he was, and it appears that despite his age he showed great maturity as a young man and had great leadership skills. It was his cricketing prowess, however, that impressed Sir Stanley Cochrane, a wealthy Irish businessman who was involved in selecting the Irish team in 1912. Now stationed in Ireland, Ryan was playing cricket locally, and some outstanding performances with the bat meant that he was selected for Ireland for the match against

South Africa.

The game at the Woodbrook ground in July presented Ryan with a great opportunity to showcase his cricketing skills on a wider stage. Sadly, he performed poorly both as a batsman and a bowler. His bowling was expensive, and when he went to the crease he scored a duck in the first innings and just 5 runs in the second. He was most unfortunate to be dismissed twice by the great South African all-rounder Aubrey Faulkner, who would later see war service with the Royal Field Artillery.

Ireland were no match for the tourists, and South Africa won the game by an innings and 165 runs. The performance that day by Ryan did little to endear him to the cricketing hierarchy, and the English-born bowler would never appear in Irish colours again.

1914 changed Ryan's life. As a young soldier with the Liverpool Regiment, he was a member of the British Expeditionary Force that landed in France just weeks after the war broke out. Still in his early twenties, he was mature beyond his years, and his leadership skills were rewarded in January 1915 when he was awarded the Military Cross for 'gallantry and great ability'. Ryan was promoted to the rank of captain, and by all accounts it was a popular move amongst the ranks as he had the earned the respect of his comrades.

In battle he proved fearless, and like his cricketing comrade Joseph Lynch he saw action at the Battle of Loos in September 1915. Close to the infamous Hill 70, where Lynch died, James Ryan also lost his life. He was killed after he led his men in an advance aimed at capturing German territory. He died ten days after his twenty-third birthday. Within days, telegram number 3,644 arrived at the Ryan family home, 'Tilecote' in Northamptonshire. It simply stated that James had been killed in action and that 'Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.' Warm tributes from his fellow officers arrived at the Ryan residence from the men who had served with him. One soldier wrote, 'I don't believe anyone else could have led his men across that terrible piece of ground, but they would follow him anywhere.'

For James's parents, the dreadful news from France brought grief,

unanswered questions, and as with all deaths there was inevitably much correspondence that had to be dealt with. The Ryan family was informed by the War Office that James was buried behind the Mayor's House in Cambrin, and that he had written a will before he died. Things were not straightforward, however, as James had officially left all the monies that he was due to a fellow officer. He wanted Lieutenant C. J. Phipps of the 1st Battalion of the King's Regiment to have all his money, or any that was 'due to me'. He also wanted his friend to have his 'cigarette case and anything else he cares to have from my kit'. James ended his will by stating that 'the remainder of my belongings including my Military Cross I leave to my parents'.

Lieutenant Phipps was contacted, and waived his right to any of his friend's money. In early 1916, after more correspondence, Ryan's possessions and back pay were finally forwarded to the family home in Northamptonshire.

The Great War cut short thousands of promising sporting lives, and the history of Irish cricket contains the names of young men who under different circumstances could have had a successful future in the game. Even before the war broke out in 1914, many potential players were lost to the sport because of military commitments at home or abroad.

Charles Trueman was another career soldier whose time in Irish cricketing colours was limited to just one appearance. He made his sole outing for Ireland in 1904 against Cambridge University at the Mardyke in Cork.Born in Devon in 1877, Trueman came from a military family, and his father, also called Charles Hamilton Trueman, had been a lieutenant colonel in the East Kent Regiment. Young Charles was sent to King's School in Canterbury, and he attended the Royal Military College at Sandhurst from 1895 to 1897.

The army was always going to be Trueman's first choice for a career, and he became a 2nd lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment, and was later promoted to captain after serving in the South African war and being honoured with the Queen's Medal.

Stationed in Ireland, Trueman began playing cricket for County

Cork and recorded a number of good innings as an opening batsman, notably against Dublin University and Na Shuler. Fate had a hand in his only international call-up in July 1904 when Ireland entertained Cambridge University in a three-day match at Cork. A number of first-choice players were not available for Ireland, so at the last minute he was offered a place in the starting eleven, and the side contained a number of other debutants.

Ireland won the toss and decided to bat and in his first innings. Trueman managed just 13 runs before he was bowled by Eric Mann who would later play for the MCC. In his second innings Trueman scored just 6 after being caught again off the impressive fast bowling of Mann. Sadly, Trueman's debut performance was not deemed good enough, and it would be his first and last display for Ireland, who were well beaten by their visitors by five wickets.

Military duties brought Trueman back to England to military bases in Portsmouth and Aldershot, and he continued to play golf and cricket and shoot, and he was also a member of the Army and Navy Club. A sociable, outgoing individual, and a keen singer and piano player, he was often the life and soul of social events.

In 1912 he became an Assistant Inspector of Gymnasia at the barracks in Aldershot, and at the outbreak of war in 1914 found himself in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. He saw action in the Battle of Mons, and then in late August Trueman and his men from the Manchester Regiment arrived at Le Cateau to support men from the Suffolk Regiment. Trueman's men moved forward on the morning of August 26 to offer assistance, and came under sustained attack from the German lines. By mid afternoon they were given the instruction to withdraw, but not before the men from the Manchester Regiment had suffered enormous casualties. Charles Trueman was killed as he led his men from A Company towards the German lines. The 37-year-old was later buried in the military cemetery at Le Cateau, and today he is also commemorated in the chapel in the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and at Blean Church in Kent.

He never married, and had no children. The Great War would

bring further heartache to the Trueman family, and in November 1918 Charles's soldier brother, Arthur, who had played much army cricket, would die from pneumonia.

Men like Arthur and Charles Trueman were always going to be career soldiers, and the prospect of military service was expected from an early age. When the war broke out in 1914, other men needed a bit more cajoling to give up the comforts of civilian life and take the 'King's Shilling'. There was no conscription in Ireland, so all Frank Browning could rely on were his powers of persuasion and an appeal to people's sense of duty. He not only took a personal interest in helping young men join the military services, but he often provided character references during the recruitment process.

In September 1914, as thousands of young men volunteered for action, Browning was asked to sign the enlistment papers for one of his friends. He supported the application of Charles Fausset, and testified that he was of 'good moral character'. Browning's testimony for the schoolteacher worked, and two days later Fausset was examined by a doctor to see if he was medically able to fight. The GP declared that he was 'fit for service at home and abroad'.

Fausset and Browning had known each other since 1910, and both shared an interest in cricket and the military. From an Anglo-Irish family, the son of a clergyman, Charles Reginald Fausset was born to Charles senior and Ellen on 9 January 1880 in Waterford. As a young boy he was a promising athlete, and he was a mile and quarter-mile champion in Ireland. At just 17 years of age he made his debut for the Irish athletics team against Scotland in Edinburgh, where he came fourth in the 880-yard race. A year later, at the Royal Dublin Showgrounds, he again ran for Ireland against Scotland. This time he took part in the mile race. Establishing a very fast pace, he secured second place.

Fausset returned to competitive action for Ireland in 1902 when he achieved fourth place in the 220-yard event, which marked his final international appearance.

Cricket brought him into contact with Frank Browning, and Fausset established himself as a 'good, though patient' batsman with

his school in Rathmines, and later at Trinity College in Dublin and also during representative matches for Leinster.Trained as a schoolmaster, Fausset joined the army's Territorial Reserve in 1912 and became a lieutenant. This part-time soldiering experience would prove invaluable,and after Frank Browning's reference and his medical examination he was quickly accepted into the Royal Irish Regiment.

In October 1914 he was commissioned and became a 2nd lieutenant, and in 1915 he arrived in France, ready for fighting in an area that would become known as the Battle of Ypres.In early May the British lines at St Julien came under heavy attack from sustained German bombardment. When Fausset arrived at the front lines the attack was still going strong, and as he stood in the trenches he was hit.According to an eyewitness a 'shell struck him and blew his head clean off'. Sometime later Fausset's comrades lifted his body and placed him in the ground. The same eyewitness recalled, 'we buried him behind a trench, but we had no time to put a cross on the grave as we were ordered to retire'.

The news of the death of a prominent sportsman at the front travelled quickly, and it soon reached newspaper offices back home in Britain and Ireland. The first the Fausset family heard of it was when they read a report of his death in *The Irish Times*. Immediately, the family sent a telegram to the War Office asking if the newspaper report was correct. The reply from London was heartbreaking, confirming that on 3 May their beloved son had been killed.

There was further correspondence with the War Office as arrangements were made for his back pay to be forwarded to the family. There was also a final piece of bad news, adding to the grief, when the family was told that the precise location of his burial was unknown because the Germans now occupied the area in which he had been buried. The chaos of war meant that Charles Fausset was now officially one of the Missing. His grave would be lost for ever.

As his relatives mourned his loss, thousands of other families across Britain and Ireland were in a similar position. Six days before Charles Fausset died his teammate Henry Etlinger lost his life in the

mud of Ypres. Etlinger and Fausset were the same age, and had much in common. They were highly regarded army officers and talented cricketers, and during their time in Dublin had turned out for the university eleven.

Unlike Fausset, Etlinger was a career soldier who had seen service in the Second Boer War and had earned a number of campaign medals. From a family of six, Henry was the son of Edmund and Charlotte Etlinger. His father was Russian born and his mother was Irish, and they had four sons and two daughters. As a child, Henry went to Durnford School in Devon, and was then sent to Marlborough College in Wiltshire, which had a fine sporting pedigree and was also Frank Browning's old school. Etlinger quickly got to grips with the basics of cricket and established himself as a decent right-handed batsman and a slow right-arm bowler. He made his debut for the school team as a 15-year-old, and became college captain in his final year at 18.

In 1899 he followed the same path as Frank Browning, and left Marlborough for the hallowed halls of Trinity College in Dublin, where he continued to play cricket and was selected for the first eleven. He had an impressive first season in university colours and managed to score nearly 500 runs, and on one occasion scored a century. In 1901 he was selected to play against Cambridge University in Dublin, and he turned out for the home team alongside Charles Fausset.Etlinger was the star of the show, and in the three-day game at College Park put in a very impressive performance. He scored 103 runs in his first innings and 15 in the second innings, with Fausset scoring 27 and 8 respectively. The Dublin students performed well, and the match was a draw. Etlinger's cricketing appearances in Dublin from then on became limited as life in the army took him to India. As an officer with the North Staffordshire Regiment he played for the Punjab, but in 1906 he got an opportunity to return home and meet up with old friends back in Ireland.

On leave from the army, he turned out for Phoenix, one of the bigger clubs in Dublin, which would regularly play two-day

challenge matches. His performances clearly impressed the Irish selectors, and in the summer of 1906 they decided to choose him for the national team. The Vice Regal Ground at Phoenix Park, which had been out of commission for a while, was reopened for the twelve-a-side game against I Zingari. The two-day encounter in late July brought Etlinger and Frank Browning together, and although the conditions did not make for good batting Etlinger's international debut proved successful. He scored just 13 runs in his first innings, and was out for a duck in his second, but both men ended up on the winning side with a margin of 253 runs.

Even though the game was successful, the match would mark Etlinger's sole appearance in Irish colours, a statistic he shared with Charles Trueman and James Ryan. Etlinger returned to his army duties, became a captain in the Bhopal Infantry, and disappeared from public view for a number of years until the news broke that he had been killed in the fighting at Ypres. He was another of 'Browning's Boys' to be killed in the war, and died on 27 April 1915, which was his 35th birthday.

Etlinger was just like the other Irish cricketers who were swept up in the rush to war and whose careers were cruelly cut short. They all shared a common bond. Sport united them, and Frank Browning shaped their lives.

4 Forgotten Gaels

'I FELT MORE NERVOUS BEFORE PLAYING AN ALL-IRELAND THAN AN ATTACK ON THE GERMANS.'

– Letter sent home by Jimmy Rossiter, All-Ireland GAA player, 1915.

All around the ground the crowd was getting anxious, pocket watches were being checked, and some supporters were thinking of heading for home. The game was nearly over, and it looked like the favourites were about to win. It had been an exciting, even contest, but there had been very few scoring opportunities.

Suddenly, the match turned as Jimmy Rossiter did what thousands of Wexford supporters knew he was very capable of. He received the ball in front of the posts, looked up, and with characteristic precision knocked it past the goalkeeper to put his side into the lead. It was his second goal of the day, and his strike forced Louth to try and get back into the game, but time was against them. When the final whistle was blown it was Wexford who were crowned Leinster champions by just

one point with a score of 2–3 to 2–2.Wexford's full forward, Jimmy Rossiter, was the man of the match.

The result of the 1913 Leinster Football final defied the pundits, who predicted that Louth, the current All-Ireland champions, would be too strong for the underdogs from Wexford.

The unexpected victory at Jones Road in Dublin, later to be renamed Croke Park, began a winning streak that would see Wexford lift six Leinster titles in a row. A skilful and strong athlete, Jimmy Rossiter was at the heart of the team. His running, handling and pinpoint accuracy in front of the goal helped to turn the side into one of the leading teams of the day.

Wexford were blessed to have an impressive coach, Jem Roche, a well-known figure in the county who was a boxer. Roche had been heavyweight champion of Ireland, and in 1908 he unsuccessfully boxed for a world title fight. Roche's team established a reputation as tough tacklers and good passers who played the game with a considerable style. From Castlebridge in County Wexford, Rossiter was viewed as a 'clever footballer' who did not just play the game, but was able to read and interpret what was happening on the pitch.

The win against Louth was the first signal that he and his teammates were a cut above other county footballers. The press soon acknowledged Wexford's success, with the *Freeman's Journal* describing the final result as 'sensational'. It soon became clear, however, that the achievements of Jem Roche's men were not just confined to Leinster competitions. Within days of the Louth victory Wexford were back in action in an All-Ireland Semi-Final against Antrim. The Ulstermen were seen as a rising force in the game, and had proved their credentials as beaten All-Ireland Finalists for the last two years. In the semi-final, Wexford were too strong for the northerners and easily secured a place in December's showpiece occasion.

The All-Ireland Final, which was Jimmy Rossiter's first, was played at the new Croke Memorial Park, which was on the site of the old Jones Road sports complex. The land was purchased for £3,500 from Frank Dineen, redeveloped by the GAA and renamed after the

late Archbishop Thomas Croke. He was the first patron of the GAA, and did much to promote hurling and football. After he died in 1902, GAA officials pledged to honour his work. The publicity surrounding the revamped new venue and the lure of Wexford's skilful footballers taking on the experienced might of Kerry helped to boost the crowd, and record numbers bought tickets.

Kerry fans arrived in Dublin in their thousands, and special trains brought spectators into the capital from Killarney, Kenmare, Valentia Harbour and Cahirciveen. Transport was a controversial issue: in 1910, Kerry refused to travel to Dublin for an All-Ireland Final following a dispute with the Great Southern Railway Company over its provision of trains for spectators and officials. This time an agreement was reached, and the Kerry players, supporters and officials departed in good time for the final.

Both teams actually arrived in Dublin the day before the game. Wexford were based at the Wicklow Hotel, and the players and officials from Kerry made their headquarters in rooms at Wynn's Hotel. The first All-Ireland football Final in the rebuilt surroundings generated much excitement, and although precise attendance figures are not known it is estimated that around 20,000 people crammed into the new arena. Arrangements were basic, and those fortunate enough to get a seat were housed in one of two stands along the Jones Road side of the pitch. The Kilkenny Pipers Band led the team out, and after Kerry won the toss they chose to play towards the railway end.

The weather was dry, and the conditions for football were perfect as there was 'little wind to speak of whilst the playing pitch was in grand order'. Wexford made the better start, and the Kerry goalkeeper, Danny Mullins, pulled off a number of important saves. Eventually their pressure paid off, and Wexford scored a point to take the lead. The advantage was short-lived, and the Kerry captain, Dick Fitzgerald, scored a goal to bring them back into the game. They added another point and went into half-time 1–1 to Wexford's 0–1. Another Kerry goal in the second half put the game out of reach for Jimmy Rossiter and his teammates, and by full-time Kerry

secured a victory 2–2 to 0–3. By his own high standards, Jimmy Rossiter had a quiet game, and although Wexford defended well, they simply could not compete with the men in green and gold.

From an organisational point of view, GAA officials were delighted that the first major football final in their new home had gone well, and generally the press thought the arena was fitting for the occasion. One correspondent wrote that 'the scene at Croke Park was an inspiring one and to watch the crowd teeming out at the close left one wondering how the grounds held such a concourse'. *The Kerryman,* whose readers were naturally delighted with the final result, noted that the encounter was 'one of the finest played in the history of the GAA'.

Jimmy Rossiter began the new year of 1914 nursing an injury that he had picked up whilst playing, and following a meeting of the central council of the GAA he was awarded some compensation. By the summer Wexford's star player was back in fine form, and the county side put together an impressive run of results. In August 1914 they contested the Leinster football final, and again the opposition were their old rivals Louth, but unlike the 1913 match this was a one-sided affair. Jimmy Rossiter was at the forefront of Wexford's attack, and with clever running and passing he created numerous chances and scored points in an impressive victory of 3–6 to 0–1. Wexford were again crowned Leinster champions, and just as he had done a year earlier, Jimmy Rossiter stole the show.

By August 1914, the news that Britain was at war with Germany impacted on every town and village in Ireland. The war was not unexpected, but it came at a politically sensitive time as the British government considered what to do with plans to introduce Home Rule in Ireland. The principle of the Home Rule legislation was to set up an all-Ireland parliament, though the move had been strongly resisted by Unionists in the northern counties.

In September 1912, nearly a quarter of a million Ulstermen under the leadership of Edward Carson signed a 'Solemn League and Covenant' as an expression of their opposition to Home Rule. Unionist determination to continue to be ruled from Westminster

also saw the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and for months the body began to import arms in readiness for a military campaign. As Unionists flexed their political muscles, Home Rulers in the south of Ireland felt that they had to act politically and militarily.

In November 1913, at a public meeting in Dublin, the Irish Volunteers was established by nationalists who wanted to see Home Rule introduced in Ireland and who opposed the formation of the UVF. The role of the Irish Volunteers was simple: they wanted to champion Ireland's aspirations for self-government, see Home Rule introduced and if necessary physically oppose the UVF.

Like the UVF, the Irish Volunteers began to import arms and weapons in readiness for an armed conflict. They also began a recruiting campaign, and fit young men were encouraged to join and take part in drilling and in the use of weapons.

In June 1914, John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party, seized control of the volunteers, and he and other members of the Irish Parliamentary Party took positions of authority. As the largest nationalist organisation in Ireland, with thousands of young men playing hurling and football every week, it was only natural that the leadership of the Irish Volunteers looked at the GAA as a perfect recruiting ground. Gaelic players were encouraged to join the Volunteers, and a number of leading GAA officials helped to establish the Volunteer network in many counties across Ireland. Recruitment was strong in places like Kerry, Dublin and in Wexford, where Jimmy Rossiter became one of their members. Often the world of the Volunteers and the GAA went hand in hand, and as recruitment soared in 1914 the sight of Irish Volunteers at GAA matches and events became quite common. In July of that year Wexford players travelled to Kerry to play a game at the Tralee Sports field against the county team in what was a repeat of the 1913 All-Ireland Final. The game was given much publicity by the press, and was billed as a clash between Ireland's two biggest teams – lovers of GAA games were encouraged not to miss this unique fixture. *The Kerryman* published an advertisement: 'It is a chance of a lifetime

and one that no Kerryman should miss.'

When the visitors arrived they were greeted enthusiastically, and large crowds cheered them in Killarney and Tralee. Around 700 Irish Volunteers were part of the welcoming party, which mingled with the players as they took part in a torchlight procession towards their hotel in Tralee, accompanied by two local bands. One observer remarked that the reception was 'the most enthusiastic ever witnessed in the Capital of the Kingdom'.

As the war took hold in Europe, two defining moments that would alter the course of Irish history occurred in September 1914. The outbreak of the conflict in Europe and the intensity of the war effort resulted in the British government suspending the implementation of the Home Rule Act in Ireland. The move divided opinion across all parts of the country.The decision came as the British Expeditionary Forces sustained heavy losses at the front, and Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, increasingly looked to Ireland for help.

In a speech on 20 September at Woodenbridge in County Wicklow, John Redmond pledged that the men of the Irish Volunteers would be part of the British war effort. He hoped that if Irishmen showed loyalty to Britain, such generosity would be rewarded after the conflict and Home Rule would be introduced. Redmond may also have thought that having thousands of men trained in the use of firearms could aid the nationalist cause if a civil war broke out when the war was over. His decision to commit Irishmen to the British Army split the wider nationalist family, and those opposed to Redmond broke away from the Irish Volunteers to set up their own movement. The vast majority of volunteers, estimated at around 140,000, backed Redmond and stayed with his unit, which became known as the 'National Volunteers'. Those that broke away, numbering around 12,000, retained the name of the 'Irish Volunteers', and were now under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill, a northerner, who was working as a professor in Dublin.

MacNeill and his supporters worked hard to discourage Irishmen from volunteering for military service with the British. The Irish

Volunteers produced anti-recruitment posters and leaflets that depicted John Redmond as a recruiting sergeant for the British Army.

In October 1914 *The Kerryman* reported on the Munster final as the debate about army recruitment gathered pace. One of the correspondents wrote:

> Recruiting sergeants and their sympathisers must have looked with envy and longing on the fine body of Irishmen who were assembled in the field. They undoubtedly would have made good food for powder but the rules and principles of the GAA have a different object than supplying recruits for Kitchener's Army.

Although he was sympathetic to John Redmond's arguments, Jimmy Rossiter initially resisted the urge to enlist, and instead he continued playing county football with Wexford.

In September 1914, he and his teammates travelled to Dublin to play Monaghan in the All-Ireland Semi-Final. As Leinster champions, Rossiter and his fellow clubmen were viewed as favourites, and from the start it became clear that they were the better team. In the first minute Wexford scored a point, and shortly afterwards secured another, with Jimmy Rossiter claiming a third. By half-time it was clear that unless Monaghan changed their style of play and showed greater effort, Wexford would run away with the game.

Predictably, the second half went the same way as the first, and Rossiter, typically, scored a goal to put the game beyond the reach of Monaghan. By full-time, Wexford had totalled two goals and 6 points, with their rivals restricted to a solitary point. The victory set up Wexford's second All-Ireland Final in two years, and not surprisingly they faced the familiar foe of Kerry.

On a Sunday in November on a dull Dublin day, Jimmy Rossiter and his teammates renewed their acquaintance with the men from

the Kingdom. The press expected a Kerry victory, and the report in the *Anglo-Celt* was typical when a correspondent stated that 'it can't be forgotten that Kerry is the most consistent football county team in Ireland'.

The game proved to be a tense, exciting encounter and Wexford made the better start. After twenty minutes they scored two goals and established a 6-point lead. The Leinstermen packed into the stands at Croke Park were delirious, and Wexford's opening play made the men from Kerry look ordinary. Jimmy Rossiter was at the heart of the action, and his skill with the ball drew much attention from the watching journalists. One reporter observed that he performed the 'shift trick with his hands which has become quite a feature in Wexford football'.

Kerry came back in the second half, and after a series of scores finally got back into the game. However, with two minutes to go Rossiter's men were ahead by a single point, and it looked like they would lift the Sam Maguire. With time pressing, Kerry pushed forward, and as some spectators started to leave the ground they were awarded a free kick around 15 yards from the Wexford goal. The Kerry captain, Dick Fitzgerald, received the ball and, judging the light wind perfectly, placed the ball over the bar to bring the scores level. Seconds later, and much to the relief of the travelling Kerry supporters, the referee signalled the end of the contest, and with the last kick of the game Kerry's captain had secured a replay.

The general consensus in the press was that Kerry were fortunate to get another chance to retain the championship, and Wexford had every right to feel hard done by. The replay took place at Croke Park on a windy day in front of around 20,000 spectators, including many soldiers in uniform. Wexford began well and dominated the first half, just as they had done in the first game.

At the interval, Jimmy Rossiter's men were ahead by 6 points. In the second period, Dick Fitzgerald's team turned the game around, and Kerry scored two goals and 3 points, with Wexford failing to add to their first-half tally. Kerry had secured their second All-Ireland

title in a row, and for the second year running Wexford came away empty-handed.

The game marked Jimmy Rossiter's last appearance at a Croke Park final, and his county career came to an end when in the early part of 1915 he decided to join the British Army. No one knows what motivated him to join up. He may have followed friends into the services, or he may have been attracted by the sense of adventure or the promise of a weekly wage. When he left Wexford for the last time he was given a rousing send-off, and members of the Father John Murphy War Pipers Band 'played him to the station'.

Whatever his reason for enlisting, it did not take long before he was in uniform, and he joined the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Guards, which was formed in 1915 from the ranks of a number of reserve battalions. On 17 August the battalion left England for France, and Jimmy Rossiter soon found himself on the battlefield at Loos in the autumn of 1915.

In letters home he was able to describe the conditions and how he felt about going into battle. He related his time in the trenches to his life as a county player with Wexford, and in one letter explained that he was more nervous before he played an All-Ireland Final than he was when he was attacking the Germans.

The Battle of Loos, which began in late September, marked one of the biggest offensives ever seen during the Great War on the Western Front. It featured the use of poison gas for the first time, and casualties were high on both the German and British lines. A fast runner and athletic, Jimmy Rossiter was an ideal recruit for the Irish Guards, and by the time he arrived at the front he was well thought of and was now a lance corporal. He saw much action, and may even have used his fitness to evade the clutches of the Germans. On one occasion he was captured, but he quickly managed to free himself and sprint back to the British lines.

On 21 October 1915 he was again involved in fighting, and on this occasion he was wounded in the head and was moved to a field hospital. The injuries were so severe, however, that he died shortly after he was examined.

The sad news finally arrived at the Rossiter home in Wexford, and it wasn't long before the local and national papers reported his passing. The death of a talented GAA player who had played in two All-Ireland Finals was understandably of great public interest, and James Rossiter's story was told across many newspaper column inches.

Wexford's star player was not the only Gaelic footballer to lose his life in the mud and smoke of France and Flanders.The participation of GAA members in the British military was controversial, and opinion was divided on whether Irishmen should take part in the Great War.

In Wexford, James Rossiter's home county, Sean Etchingham, the president of the county board, was critical of those who volunteered to fight in a British uniform. He argued that no honourable man should ever support recruitment into the British forces, and in a direct reference to James Rossiter he talked about former players having a 'grave in a foreign land'.

The presence of GAA members in British uniforms and the ongoing recruitment campaign by the British Army caused difficulties for the GAA leadership. The association, which was founded in County Tipperary in 1884, was supportive of the ideals of Irish nationalism. It was established to promote Irish sporting pastimes, and was charged with halting the increasing Anglicisation of Ireland. Understandably, many in the hierarchy of the association believed that service in the British Army ran counter to the GAA's broader and wider nationalist ideals. The association's own rules prohibited members of the British military from being GAA members, and this potential bar to membership was raised in the House of Commons in April 1915.

The Under Secretary for War, Harold Tennant, was quizzed by Sir Frederick Banbury if he was aware of the GAA excluding soldiers from their ranks. Tennant replied that it was difficult to gauge what effect the GAA's position had on army recruitment in Ireland. However, an Irish Party MP, P.J. Meehan, intervened, and suggested

that many of those Irishmen who had enlisted were in fact GAA members.

British Army recruiters saw the ranks of the GAA as fertile territory, just as football and rugby clubs in Britain had provided hundreds of young men for the front line. Those in charge of the enlistment campaign in Ireland often used soldiers with GAA connections as part of their effort to boost recruitment. John Fox, who played half-back for Clare in their 1914 All-Ireland-winning hurling team, was just the kind of Irish soldier senior British officers wanted to see in their ranks. Tall and very athletic, he was an ideal recruit, and when he joined the Irish Guards in July 1915 the local newspaper, the *Clare Journal,* reported that he got a 'great send- off'.

Fox would later fight in the Battle of the Somme, and when he came home after the war he was technically barred from playing GAA games because of his military background, although unofficially it appears that he continued to enjoy hurling. His return to Newmarket-on-Fergus was very different to his departure, and the changed political atmosphere meant that he was accused of taking 'John Bull's soup'.

Another individual who was used to aid recruitment was Captain Laurence Roche, a native of Limerick, who had been a GAA member for nearly three decades and who was a former county chairman. At a public meeting in Kerry in 1915, Captain Roche expressed hopes that more GAA members would join the ranks and that he looked forward to the day that he would hear cries of 'Up Kerry' and 'Up Ireland' in the trenches. Kerrymen did end up in the front line, and two such individuals were Private John O'Sullivan and Corporal J. Nagle, who were both members of the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers, which had a home barracks in the county.

Keen followers of the GAA, the two soldiers asked for copies of the local newspapers to be sent out to the frontline so that they and a number of other Kerrymen could be kept informed of the county team's progress. In a letter home, both men wrote: 'As the Kerry team have defended the honour of the old kingdom in the All-Ireland

contest, so we too are doing our utmost to defend the honour of our land.'

Precise figures are not known of how many GAA players enlisted in the British Army, but it is clear that the Great War had an enormous effect on many clubs right across Ireland. Military recruitment meant that many hurling and football clubs were unable to field full teams during the conflict because their members were in the British Army.

Ross O'Carroll has researched the effect the Great War had on Gaelic sports, and his work indicates that although senior GAA figures believed their members should not join the British Army, at a local level that advice was often ignored. Reports from newspapers in places like Clare, Cork and Belfast all suggest that as the war took hold a number of local clubs struggled to put together teams. In Killaloe, so many hurling players volunteered for military service that the club stopped playing matches completely.

At the GAA's Annual Congress in 1915, a motion originally proposed by the Laois County Board would have allowed GAA members to volunteer for the British Army without facing disqualification from playing GAA games. The motion was later withdrawn, but it indicates that some within the GAA wanted to keep those members who had joined the British Army within the 'GAA family' rather than exclude them. It also highlights the fact that in the early years of the war army recruitment had an enormous impact on some GAA clubs. In uncertain economic times, many GAA players, like thousands of other Irishmen, saw the British Army as a way of earning money and providing for their families, particularly when local jobs were scarce.

Patrick Corey joined the British Army, and was a reservist before the Great War began. Born around 1887 in Derryloran in County Tyrone, he originally lived in Cookstown with his mother, brother and sister. A keen sportsman, he worked as a labourer and in his spare time played soccer and Gaelic football. Known as 'Paddy', he was a talented player and started playing for Cookstown Brian Og team in 1909 when he was in his early twenties. He stood out from

the other team members, and his performances soon attracted coverage in the *Ulster Herald.* Corey was a regular point scorer for his team, and his skill helped the side to become one of the leading GAA clubs in County Tyrone. Corey's consistency warranted a call-up to the county side, and in August 1909 he played for Tyrone in an Ulster Championship match against Fermanagh at Clones. Corey's sporting ability transferred to the soccer pitch, and he was a member of the Cookstown Whites Football Club and the Derryloran Football Club. It was there he played alongside Harry Tohill and Thomas Darragh, two men who would join Corey in the ranks of the British Army. Corey was despatched to the front and saw action at the Battle of Mons. He was seriously wounded in October 1914, and his injuries required a three-month stay in hospital.

In January 1915, fit and well recovered, he was finally allowed home leave, and by May of that year he was back in action at the front with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Corey was posted to Bethune in France, which was a pretty town with a square, a collection of cafés and a popular pastry shop, much loved by soldiers. The town also boasted clean billets for the men and provided great relief away from the strain and stresses of trench warfare. Although Bethune was situated away from the front line, the town was still routinely hit by enemy fire.

On 22 July 1915, Paddy Corey was in his billet when the building came under enemy fire. One of Corey's comrades, Sergeant McAtackney, was helping an illiterate soldier write a letter home when the shelling began. The explosion threw McAtackney into a water trough, and when he came round he went into the billet and found that Corey and fourteen others had been killed by the shelling. Paddy Corey was buried at Bethune Town Cemetery, and after the war his name was placed on the war memorial in Cookstown. Some of Corey's footballing pals who played alongside him at Derryloran Football Club also lost their lives in the Great War. Harry Tohill died in the heat of Gallipoli in August 1915. Thomas Darragh was killed in action at Guillemont, and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme.

In the summer of 1916, as the Battle of the Somme raged in France, William Manning left his native Belfast to serve with the British Army. An All-Ireland football finalist with Antrim, Manning was a familiar face, and as he and his comrades marched through Belfast city centre he was spotted by the crowd and his departure was reported in the press.

From West Belfast, he was brought up close to the Falls Road, where he lived with his widowed mother and his brother and sister. Manning's late father had served with the RIC and had been stationed in Ardglass in County Down. Tall and strong, William Manning was both a talented hurler and footballer who found his way into a series of Belfast teams, including John Mitchel's and Ollamh Fodhla.

However, it was in the colours of Antrim that he really made his mark as a skilful and hard-working defensive player. By 1911, Antrim were one of Ireland's most impressive county teams, having chalked up a series of wins as Ulster champions. That year they also became the first Ulster county to progress into an All-Ireland Final.

After Antrim beat Kilkenny 3–1 to 1–1 in the semi-final in December 1911, they got through to the final, which was actually held in January 1912. Antrim's semi-final win was much deserved, and according to the *Freeman's Journal,* Kilkenny were 'beaten by a better team'. The newspaper also noted that the victory showed the 'strides the game has made in the Black North in recent years'. Antrim's footballing strength lay in a number of key areas, particularly ball control, as a number of team members had previously played for soccer clubs, which meant that at times the county side exhibited what was seen as a soccer style of play. It is possible that one Antrim star who went under the pseudonym W. Williams was also a soccer player who wanted to keep his real identity secret.

The suggestion that GAA players could take part in other sports was rooted in controversy. Officially, the GAA hierarchy frowned upon any of their members playing other sports, such as rugby and soccer, which were viewed as 'foreign'. In 1902 a motion was passed

by the GAA's Central Council that meant players would be expelled from the GAA if they played or encouraged the playing of 'West-British pastimes like rugby or soccer'.

If Williams was a soccer player it seems no action was taken against him as his name often appears on the Antrim team sheet. Most of the Antrim team represented Belfast GAA clubs such as John Mitchels, Patrick Sarsfields, Ollamh Fodhla and Seaghan an Diomais. Some were local lads, and others, such as Sean Coburn, hailed from Louth. Another player, John Mitchel Darby, was a Liverpudlian who arrived in Belfast in 1907 and who worked as a teacher.

The first All-Ireland Final of 1912 took place on Sunday 14 January at Jones Road in Dublin, and Antrim faced a strong Cork side. Cork were the favourites to lift the title, and Antrim's rise to the higher echelons of the GAA was noted by one observer as a 'veritable bolt from the blue'. The staging of the final in January meant that players had to maintain their fitness over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. That resulted in light-hearted warnings in the press about the dangers of overeating and drinking during the Christmas break, and the *Freeman's Journal* warned players to avoid 'too liberal indulgence', and in particular to 'avoid too much plum pudding'.

By the beginning of 1912, training in the run-up to the game for both teams was intense with the players being put through their paces, on occasions three nights a week. Both teams arrived in Dublin the night before the game, and by the time they arrived at Jones Road on Sunday the place was a cauldron of noise and colour.

Thousands of spectators made the trip to Dublin, with special trains laid on from Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Belfast. Trams and a large number of hackney cars ferried many out to Jones Road, and by the throw-in some 13,000 souls were packed inside the ground.

Cork had the early possession and looked the livelier of the two teams, and at half-time went in leading by 1–4 to 1–1.

The second half continued to go Cork's way, and Antrim had very

few chances to get back into the game. As the match moved to the final stages Cork's superiority became all the more obvious, and a series of goals put them well beyond the reach of the Northerners. By full-time, Cork had amassed an impressive tally of 6–6, with Antrim on 1–2. The winning margin of 19 points meant that Antrim's first All-Ireland Final ended in defeat, though their appearance at Jones Road would not be their last in 1912.

In August of that year, the men from the North took on the might of Kerry in the All-Ireland Semi-Final. Kerry were a majestic team made up of some of the finest county footballers in Ireland, including the talented Dick Fitzgerald, and their style of play attracted thousands of admirers. Antrim were not expected to win, but after the first half the omens looked good when they went into the interval with a 1-point lead over Kerry.

In the second half, Antrim stepped up a gear and scored three goals and put the tie beyond doubt. By full-time the Ulstermen had secured a famous victory of 3–5 to just 2 points. William Manning and his teammates had played the game of their lives and made Kerry look rather ordinary. It was the worst result the men from the Kingdom had ever experienced, and in the history of the GAA it would go down as one of the most sensational results.

The shock scoreline meant that Antrim secured another place in an All-Ireland Final, which was their second of 1912. To this day they remain the only team to play in two All-Ireland Finals in the same year. The game in Dublin pitched Manning's men against Louth, who had previously been awarded the All-Ireland title back in 1910.

On the first Sunday in November, William Manning and his teammates walked out onto the Jones Road turf following members of the Belfast Pipers Band. The Antrim players wore armbands as a mark of respect to teammate John Mitchel Darby, who had played in the previous final and who had died recently. Moments later the Louth team emerged, and they took to the field as the St James Band played 'A Nation Once Again'.

In dry conditions, with little breeze, the game began after Antrim

won the toss and chose to defend the goal at the railway end. Thousands of Ulster voices could be heard amongst an estimated 20,000 spectators who were inside the ground, while many without tickets watched the game from nearby trees and rooftops. The all-ticket affair proved to be a money spinner for the GAA authorities, and the gate receipts totalled £510.

There were few scoring opportunities during the first half, and at the break, after a frenetic opening period, Louth had scored 2 points with Antrim on just 1 point.

At the interval two racing pigeons, each carrying a note containing the half-time score, were released at the ground. The birds were destined for the home of a pigeon fancier in Belfast, possibly an Antrim supporter, who was clearly keen to keep tabs on developments at Jones Road. It is also possible that the birds may have been organised by journalists keen to get the details of the match in time for Monday's newspapers. As the winged messengers flew north, William Manning and his teammates battled it out with Louth in an attempt to bring the All-Ireland title back to Belfast for the first time.

The pace of the second half mirrored that of the first, and the two teams were evenly matched. With fifteen minutes to go, Antrim led Louth by two points, and it looked like the men from Ulster were destined for glory. Victory would help Antrim supporters forget about the drubbing Cork had inflicted on them earlier in the year. Louth had different ideas, however, and fought back, and as the game ebbed away they took their scoring opportunities well, and at the final whistle ran home winners 1–7 to 1–2. Antrim's thousands of supporters who made the journey south had to return to Belfast empty-handed once again.

Even though they were unsuccessful, Antrim's footballing display and attitude impressed the watching neutrals, and one observer wrote that they had 'gained a moral triumph' and that it was clear that 'Ulster Gaels are now a power to be reckoned with.' Sadly for supporters of Antrim, those experiences in Dublin when battling for Gaelic football's highest honour would prove to be rare. The county

football team would never play again in an All-Ireland Final.

William Manning's sporting ability was not limited to county football. He was a talented hurler with the Shauns club, and helped them to win the County Antrim Championship. He was with Antrim when they won the Ulster Championship. Well known, particularly in West Belfast, he was a local hero, and today, in the modern media world he would be regarded as a sporting celebrity.

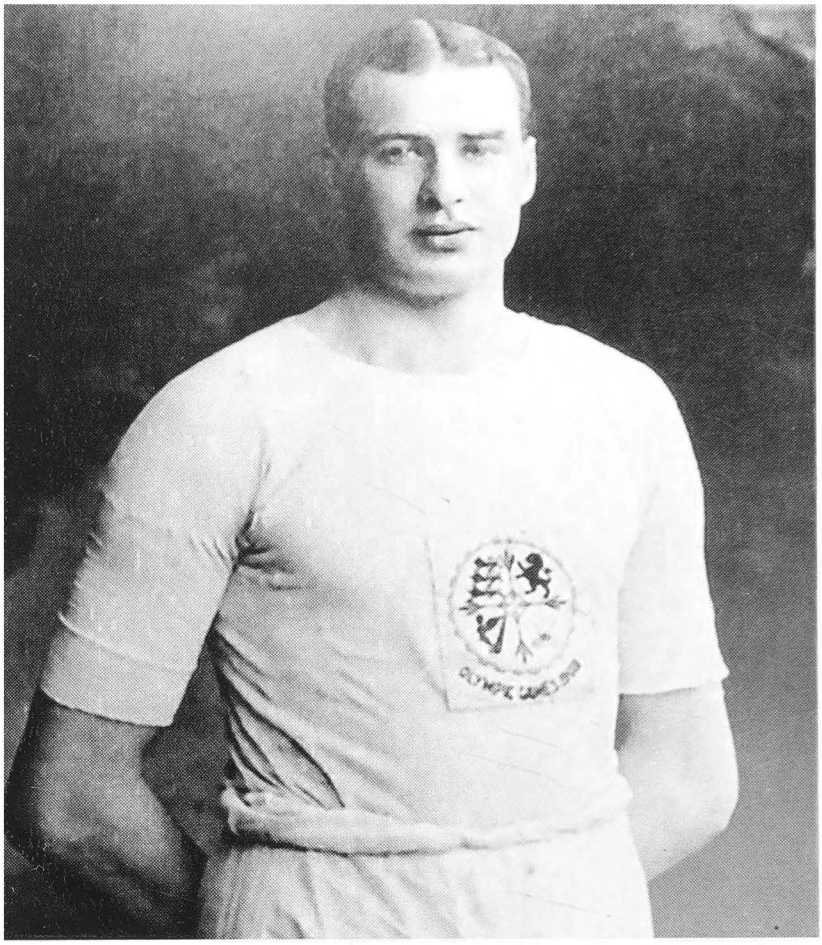
At the age of 23, William Manning made a life-changing decision when he decided to join the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, later becoming a sergeant with the 10th Battalion. He was popular and well liked, and whilst some may have disagreed with his decision to enlist, he was given a friendly send-off before he left home in 1916 when his friends toasted his honour in a Belfast bar. He saw service in France, and by 1918 he was in the front line near St Quentin in France, where along with his comrades he was engaged in a daily battle with German troops. The dangers lay everywhere, such as shells, sniper bullets and the dreaded gas, which had claimed thousands of lives.

On 27 March, whilst he was on duty, William Manning was hit by a machine gun bullet and died instantaneously. His death affected the entire platoon, who respected and loved the West Belfast man. He was regarded by all who met him as a kind and genial soul. Manning's commanding officer, Captain G. Craddock, sent a letter to William's mother expressing his sympathy. He wrote:

> He died without any pain, hit by a machine gun bullet. He was my platoon sergeant for some time and I always placed the greatest confidence and trust in him. I don't think I've ever felt so knocked out about anyone's death. [...] He had one of the kindest hearts it's been my fortune to meet. He had applied for his commission some time before and I cannot help thinking that if he had been spared he would have made one of our finest officers.
>
> [...] I feel I am expressing the opinion of officers, NCOs and men in saying that he was one of the

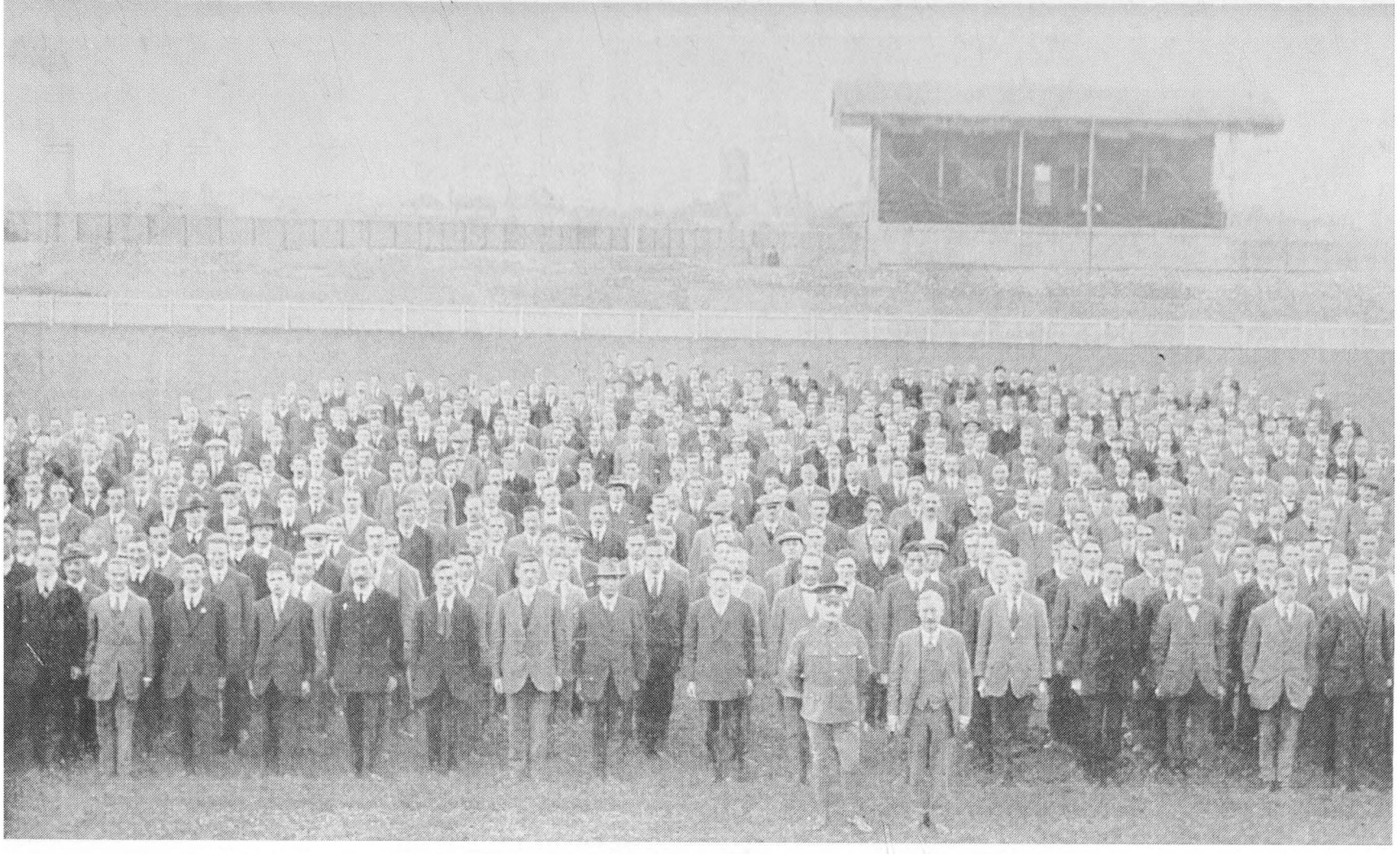
1. Basil Maclear was the first Irish Rugby International to die in the Great War. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

2. After he made his International debut in 1905 Basil Maclear was described as the 'greatest discovery in modern times'. (Picture courtesy Maclear family archives and Bedford School)



3. An All- Ireland champion athlete Paddy Roche ran in the London Olympics in 1908. (Picture courtesy Colm Murphy)

4. Frank Browning, pictured with his trademark hat and cigarette, played a leading role in Irish cricket and rugby. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)



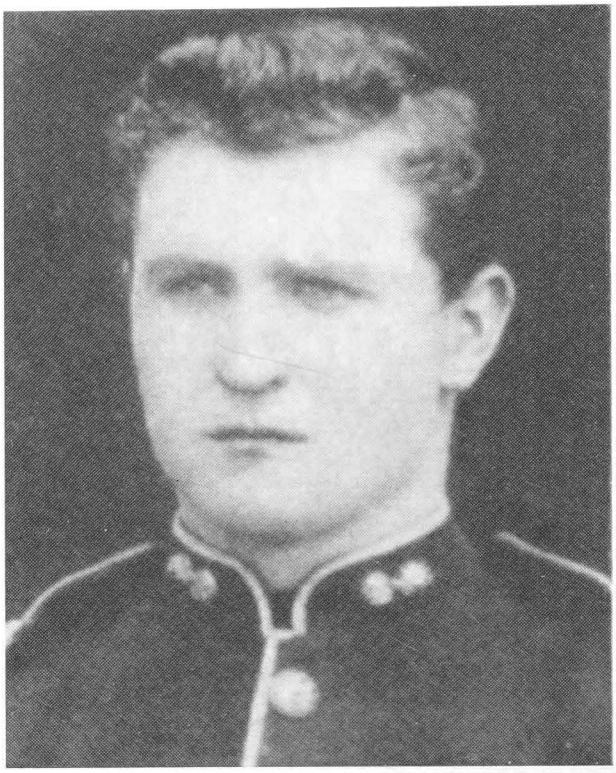
5. During the Great War hundreds of sportsmen enlisted and many used Lansdowne Road to train and drill. (Picture courtesy Henry Hanna and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive)

6. Vincent McNamara and Harry Jack were referred to as 'Macky and Jack'. They played together at University College Cork, for Munster and for Ireland. Vincent McNamara was killed at Gallipoli in November 1915 whilst Harry Jack survived the war. (Picture courtesy University College Cork archives)

7. Irish rugby international Jasper Brett played alongside Vincent McNamara in the famous 'Battle of Balmoral', which is regarded as the most violent game ever played between Ireland and Wales. He died in February 1917. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

8. Michael Moran was the finest Irish golfer of his generation. He was the first Irish player to win prize money at the Open. (Picture courtesy *Irish Life* magazine)

9. Robert Gregory was a celebrated airman, artist and cricketer. After he died in 1918 W.B. Yeats wrote a number of poems in his honour. (Picture courtesy Cricket Ireland / Cricket Europe)



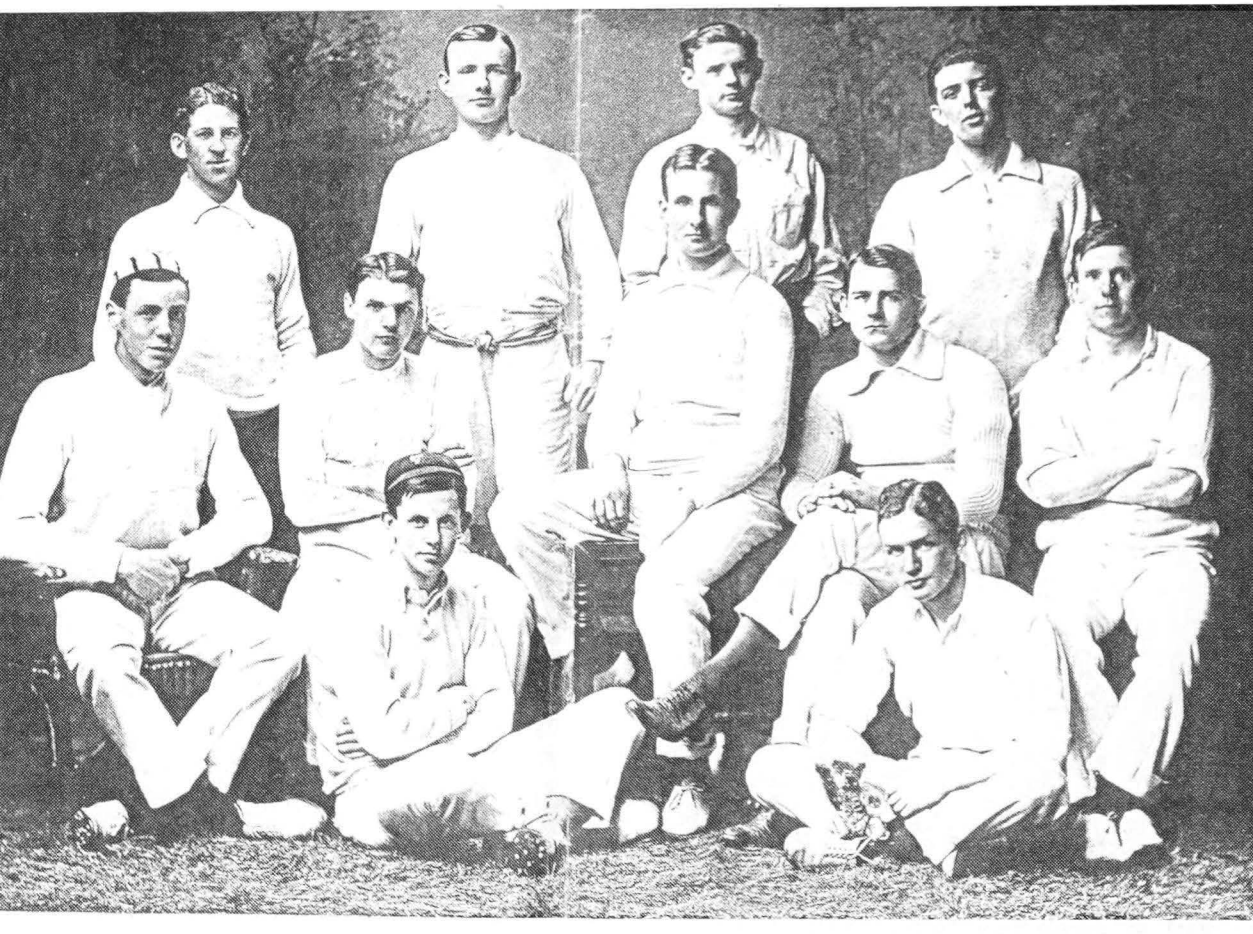
10. GAA player Patrick Corey played county football for Tyrone. A member of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, he died in 1915. (Picture courtesy Annie Bell)

11. Belfast man William Manning (back row, far right) was a member of the Antrim team that played in 1912 All-Ireland Final. He was killed in March 1918. (Picture courtesy Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Library & Archive)

12. Wexford GAA team featuring Jimmy Rossiter (Middle row, far left) who played in the 1914 All-Ireland Final. In 1915 he joined the Irish Guards and he saw action at the Battle of Loos. He wrote home saying he felt 'more nervous playing an All Ireland than an attack on the Germans'. He was killed in October 1915. (Picture courtesy Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Library & Archive)

13. Irish cricketer Joseph Lynch was a member of the Yorkshire Regiment and died in 1915. (Picture courtesy Margaret Doyle, archivist, Clongowes Wood College)

14. Dick Moore was an Irish football international who helped Linfield become one of the best teams in Ireland in the 1890s. He died in Greece in 1918. (Picture *Belfast Evening Telegraph* archives)



15. The 1910 Edinburgh University cricket team featured two Campbell College old boys who died in the Great War. In the middle row (far right) is John George Anderson who would play hockey for Scotland. He died in March 1918. Beside him is Alfred Squire Taylor who would become an Irish rugby international. He was killed in July 1917. (Picture courtesy Edinburgh University archives)

finest men it's been our lot to meet.

Manning's death was first reported by the Belfast newspapers, and one publication hoped that the reports of his demise were untrue. When his death was confirmed, the tributes to the West Belfast soldier were fulsome, and many journalists concentrated on his sporting prowess rather than his soldiering abilities. One noted that:

> Willie, as he was affectionately known, was one of the finest defensive players that ever represented Antrim in provincial and All-Ireland engagements, being a remarkably clever exponent of half- and three-quarter back play.

Like the Wexford legend Jimmy Rossiter, William Manning is remembered as a sportsman and a soldier. The two players achieved the ultimate in county football, and both had the opportunity to show off their talents on the GAA's highest stage: an All-Ireland Final.

William Manning's role in the Antrim side of 1912 would lie forgotten for a century. In 2012 he and his teammates were remembered in a special ceremony at the Titanic Building in Belfast in an event that was organised by the Ulster Council of the GAA and initiated by Donal McAnallen. He researched the story of the 1912 Antrim side, and discovered that the players, who won a series of Ulster titles, did not receive their medals for many years. Keen to right this wrong, and anxious to mark the side's achievements, the GAA invited descendants of the men to the celebratory evening, where new medals were presented.

William Manning and his teammates represent a bygone age of Gaelic games. He was a member of the Antrim hurling and football team, which was made up of clubs that no longer exist. He played during a period of enormous political and social turmoil in Ireland, and at a time when civil strife and uncertainty overshadowed sport.

Tens of thousands of Irishmen wore the colours of the Crown

during the Great War, and when they returned home they came back to a different country. Attitudes changed after the 1916 Easter Rising, and many war veterans decided to remain quiet about their days in uniform.

Although many GAA members were apolitical and did not participate in the Rising, some well-known hurlers and footballers were prominent in the fight for Irish freedom. They included All-Ireland winner Frank Burke, Gerard Feeney, Kerry legend Austin Stack, who was a leading figure in the Irish Volunteers, and Wexford official Sean Etchingham took part in the Rising in Enniscorthy.

Many GAA members would soon join the emerging Sinn Féin party, and others would find themselves imprisoned for their beliefs and for taking part in acts of rebellion against British rule. Whilst the association hierarchy did not officially back those behind the Rising, there was clear support in GAA ranks for those who wanted Ireland to achieve independence, and many leading figures saw membership of the British Army as a betrayal of the GAA's core beliefs.

Writing in 1916, journalist Thomas O'Sullivan argued that the GAA, whilst essentially a sporting body, had a strongly nationalist outlook. He wrote that the GAA has:

> helped not only to develop Irish bone and muscle, but to foster a spirit of earnest nationality in the hearts of the rising generation, and it has been a means of saving thousands of young Irishmen from becoming mere West Britons.

During the dark days of the Great War, and in the aftermath of the Rising, officials were often keen to stress that the association was a sporting grouping and not a political body. The GAA's relationship with nationalism is an important one, but it is only part of the story.

The association faced great challenges after the war ended, particularly when Gaelic games were suspended because of the ongoing violence between the IRA and British military forces.The

atmosphere boiled over on 21 November 1920, which became known as 'Bloody Sunday', and marked the darkest day in GAA history. Fourteen people died, including Tipperary footballer Mick Hogan, when soldiers and police officers fired on the crowd during a game at Croke Park that was being held as a fundraiser for Republican prisoners. Earlier, IRA gunmen had killed fourteen people in Dublin, including men suspected of being at the heart of British intelligence operations in the city.

History has influenced and shaped the GAA like no other sporting organisation in Ireland, and over the past century it has had to adapt to major social and political change.

Over the last twenty-five years the GAA has embraced change and has responded to political and social developments. The organisation scrapped its ban on members of the security forces playing Gaelic games, and Croke Park was opened up to allow soccer and rugby internationals to take place. The revamped ground, which hosts the Hogan Stand, named after the Tipperary footballer, has also been the scene of a number of key events in recent years.

In 2007, before the Ireland rugby team played England, the strains of 'God Save the Queen' echoed around the ground with reverential respect. In 2011, as part of the historic royal visit to Ireland, the Queen went to Croke Park in a remarkable move that indicated how much Anglo-Irish relations have changed in recent years. Similarly, when the Irish President Michael D. Higgins made his historic visit to Britain in 2014, he used the occasion to mark the role Irishmen played in the Great War.

The centenary of the conflict has given the GAA an opportunity to remember those players who played a part in the war, particularly those whose stories have been forgotten. Unlike rugby, cricket or soccer, little has been documented about the hurlers or county footballers who enlisted and wore the British uniform. In the post-war Ireland of the 1920s there was no appetite to commemorate or even discuss the role GAA members played in British forces. Some clubs folded, and the names of those who volunteered for military service also disappeared into the archives. Although there are numerous memorials in rugby and cricket clubs across Ireland, there

are no commemorative plaques in GAA buildings marking the role of players who fought and died in the Great War.

In October 2014 the Ulster Council of the GAA took a major step towards remembering those Gaelic players from Ulster who took part in the 1914–18 conflict. The project aims to record the names of those GAA players who volunteered and to chronicle their stories. No detailed research has ever been conducted into how many GAA members enlisted with the British forces during the Great War, but the final figure is expected to run into thousands. The politics of the last nine decades resulted in this part of Irish history being hidden. Many families with military connections often kept quiet about their descendants who had served the Crown. It was easier, simpler and often safer to remain silent.

An improvement in Anglo-Irish relations, the ceasefires in Northern Ireland and a greater understanding in the Republic of the history of Great War has changed the atmosphere. The past still presents much difficulty for many people, but it is clear that a growing number are now prepared to embrace their family history rather than shun it.

5 Death in Wartime

'I KNOW THAT I SHALL MEET MY FATE. SOMEWHERE AMONG THE CLOUDS ABOVE.'
– W. B. Yeats

In the comfortable surroundings of the drawing room of her County Galway home, Lady Gregory sat for hours writing letters. She was a prolific correspondent and diarist, and most days chronicled the ups and downs of life on the family estate at Coole Park. A playwright, author and founder of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, she was a busy and influential woman, and there was always much to write about and organise. The widow of a diplomat and former MP Sir William Henry Gregory, she was instrumental in promoting Irish literature and was a close friend of the poet W. B. Yeats, who often stayed and wrote at the Gregory home.

Much of Augusta Gregory's correspondence related to her writing and theatre work, and many of her family letters were to her son,

Robert, who was serving with the Royal Flying Corps in Italy.

By 1918 the 36-year-old had established himself as a brave and successful pilot, and had recently been awarded the Military Cross and Legion d'Honneur. Augusta Gregory was devoted to him, and after the death of her husband some twenty-five years earlier he had become the main man in her life. Mother and son were very close, and every few days they would swap their stories, news of the war in Italy exchanged for the latest political row in Dublin or gossip from the townlands of Connaught.

The new year was just a month old, and Lady Gregory was as usual sitting at her writing desk with her back to the window. It was the part of the house where she created characters and storylines for her plays and where she wrote her poems. It was her own space, where she felt creative and at ease. Ornate mirrors hung on the walls, and nearby there were portraits and a number of first-edition books signed by her writer friends. Close by was the typewriter that she used to create the first drafts of her work. As she sat hunched in her chair there was a knock on the door and Marian, one of the house staff, stepped into the room holding a telegram. She offered it to her employer, who could see that it was from London and was simply addressed to 'Mrs Gregory'. The brief four lines were perfunctory and took about fifteen seconds to read. Signed by the Secretary of the War Office, the note stated:

> Deeply regret to inform you Major R Gregory MC Connaught Rangers attached RFC 66 Squadron was killed in action January twenty-third. The Army Council express their sympathy.

Robert had been killed in a training flight in the skies above Padova, but it would take some time before that detail would be made clear. Grief-stricken, Lady Gregory made her way to see Robert's wife, Margaret, who was in Galway. When Margaret unexpectedly saw her mother-in-law she naturally sensed that something was wrong. She simply asked, 'Is he dead?' The two women then broke down and

cried together. Their beloved Robert was gone. Ireland's most famous airman had been killed on active service.

Augusta Gregory wanted to share the dreadful news with others, and the next day she sent a telegram to her friend W.B. Yeats:

> Dear Willie – the long dreaded telegram has come – Robert has been killed in action. I came here to tell Margaret – I will go home in a day or two – It is very hard to bear.
>
> [...] If you feel like it sometime – write something down that we may keep – you understood him better than many.

Lady Gregory's desire to see written tributes to her dead son would eventually lead to four poems being penned by Yeats, the most famous of them being 'An Irish Airman Foresees his Death'.

Robert was Augusta and William's only child, and although his full name was William Robert Gregory, after his father, he was simply known as Robert. Augusta and William were married in Ireland in 1880, and there was quite an age gap between them. A widower, Sir William was sixty-two years old and his young bride was twenty-seven. He had led a distinguished life before he got married. He had been Governor of Ceylon, and on his return to London had been knighted. Earlier in his life he had been a Member of Parliament and a Privy Councillor. He was well travelled and well educated, and had a privileged upbringing including time at Harrow School and Oxford University. A classics scholar, he was a keen collector of books and paintings.

Augusta was also a book lover and had been fascinated with reading and writing from an early age. As Isabella Augusta Persse, she was one of thirteen children born into a landowning Anglo-Irish family whose estate was at Roxborough in Loughrea, which was very close to the Gregory home.

It was at a cricket match in the large grounds of the Persse estate at Roxborough that Augusta and William met in 1877. Cricket was

in the Persse genes, and a number of family members went on to play the game with distinction. After their first meeting William and Augusta saw each other regularly. They shared a common interest in literature and spent hours chatting about new novels and stories, and often swapped books they had just read. It took a while for romance to blossom, but in 1880 they were finally married in Dublin, and a year later Robert was born in Central London. The Gregorys liked to split their time between England and Ireland, and when they were in London they stayed at their home at St George's Place at Hyde Park Corner.

The new Mr and Mrs Gregory embraced an aristocratic lifestyle and enjoyed lunches, dinners and social gatherings with the establishment figures of Victorian Britain. When they were not in London or at the family home in Galway they liked to travel to the continent, particularly to Italy. Parenthood did little to diminish the Gregorys' desire to journey abroad, and young Robert was often left with family and friends when William and Augusta went overseas.

Robert's early childhood was split between England and Ireland, and it was a contrasting experience. He saw the hustle and bustle of city life in London, and there were trips to various parks and the zoo and many grand parties. In Ireland, back at the family estate in Coole, he had fields to roam and trees to climb. It was an adventurous time for a young boy who was keen to explore the outside world. In London he went to day school, and then in 1891 he was sent to Park Hill, a boarding school in Lyndhurst in Sussex. He was waved off at a London railway station by his mother and father, and promised faithfully to write to them about his life away from home.

Robert kept his word, and over the coming months neatly written letters were posted back from Sussex full of the comings and goings of life as a boarder at Park Hill. He performed well academically, and in the regular reports that were sent home his progress in classics, mathematics and French was good, and his work was deemed 'satisfactory'. Sport dominated the life of the young schoolboy, and his letters were littered with references to games of cricket, football

and hockey.

In one letter to his father he expressed concern that his cricketing skills were not good enough and his team were going to get beaten:

> We have a very bad eleven now, and I am afraid that we will be licked. One of the boys made 24 runs. I can't bat a bit but I can field pretty well. [...] We have a good deal of cricket and the side I am on almost always gets beaten.

The young Gregory was clearly anxious that he would not get selected for the next match, and he confided in his father: 'I do not know whether I shall be in the eleven for there is another boy who perhaps will be in the eleven instead of me.'

Robert's letters to his parents were affectionate, full of fun, and exhibit the normal excited ramblings of a young boy trying to cope with school life and new experiences. He loved the outdoors, and talked about caterpillars and collecting butterflies. He requested that his father send him a 'killing jar' for butterflies, and he promised to pay for it when 'I come home'. Like his contemporaries, he sometimes fell foul of school rules. In one letter he talked about how some pupils had been caned for 'making a row in their bedroom'. In another note he revealed that he had also been punished: 'I got an imposition yesterday of 600 words for playing in school – but impositions are very common.'

Away from home, Robert was largely shielded from the unfolding drama surrounding his father's health. He was obviously aware that his father was unwell, and Robert's letters show this. In one letter he indicates that his mother had told him that his father was sick, and he wishes him well. However, as a child he may not have appreciated how seriously his father was declining.

By the summer of 1891, Sir William, who was now 73, had a persistent cough, difficulty breathing, and was getting weaker. He lost weight and was frail, and matters got worse at Christmas and into the New Year. He died in March 1892 with Augusta at his

bedside.

The following year Robert started a new school at Elstree, north of London. He would stay there for three years, and then, just before his fourteenth birthday, he followed in his father's footsteps, starting at Harrow School. It was at Harrow that Robert Gregory's love of cricket intensified. Compared to his previous schools he had a greater opportunity to play the game, and he was able to take part in regular competitive matches.

He loved the game, and any free time he had away from the classrooms was spent throwing a cricket ball and practising his batting and bowling. Although he was intellectually bright, it seems that he did not push himself academically, and it is clear that at Harrow his main interest was sport. Life soon settled into a routine for the schoolboy, and he spent different parts of each year in England and Ireland. When the school holidays arrived they were either spent in London with his mother, or travelling with her back to the family estate in County Galway, which he often did. The open space of Coole Park meant that he could go shooting and fishing, and inevitably there were cricket matches in the grounds of the estate with relatives and neighbours. Robert had also developed a talent for painting and drawing, particularly landscapes and portraits, and at Harrow and during the holidays in Ireland he often took out his sketchpad.

As his schooling was coming to end, Augusta and Robert had many conversations about what he should do for a career and where he might study next. He toyed with the idea of a job at Westminster, but it never materialised, and instead in 1899 he made the journey to Oxford University to read classics. The new setting provided an opportunity to play more cricket, and he was selected as a very useful bowler for New College. In 1901 he played against Blenheim and took six wickets. He also notched up 16 and 12 runs, which showed that he could bat a bit as well.

Cricket was not the only sport that he was interested in, and during his time at Oxford he boxed. By all accounts he was very capable in the ring, and it seems that as someone of slight stature he

boxed well as a lightweight. Although it appears that he was a good fighter, there are no records to suggest that he represented the university.

Despite his dalliances with boxing, cricket remained his first sporting love, and in 1902 he played for a team that had the grand title of the Oxford University Authentics. He was clearly enthusiastic and eager to improve, and his brief performances were good enough to secure a trial for the first eleven. The trial in June was a two-day affair, and records suggest that he played reasonably well under the watchful eyes of the selectors. Gregory was recorded as scoring 9 runs, and he secured good reports for his bowling, one correspondent suggesting that he showed some 'distinct promise'. His bowling was also viewed as having good 'pitch and pace'.

In the eyes of the coaches, however, his performance with the ball and bat was not deemed good enough, and Robert's chance of progressing to the university's cricketing elite swiftly disappeared. The opportunity would not come again. He left Oxford in 1903 with a Bachelor of Arts degree under his belt, and by the summer he had made some firm decisions on his future career. In his final months at university Robert had many discussions back at the Coole estate with W. B. Yeats about how he could use his artistic skills. He produced some drawings of costumes and some plans for the set design of a play and showed them to the poet, who was impressed with his ability. The conversations with Yeats and the positive responses to his drawings led Robert to decide that he should train professionally as an artist. He was, after all, very well connected. His mother had established herself as a playwright of note, and she was keen to encourage Robert that he could make a living as a set designer.

Robert enrolled at the prestigious Slade School of Art in London, where he was tutored by Henry Tonks. This gave him a great opportunity to learn from professionals, but also meant that he could go to galleries and art shows in London and make contacts and rub shoulders with artists who were making a living from designing, drawing and painting.

Robert continued to write home to his mother, although it seems that he was not as frequent a correspondent as he had been during his time in Oxford. London presented many distractions away from the classroom and studio, and his letters back to County Galway indicate that he was enjoying the social life that the English capital provided.

One letter shows how his mother was expecting set designs from Robert, but he had not had time to create them because he had just moved house. He tells her: 'I am very sorry for not having written or sent the designs.' He later adds that, 'I moved in last Wednesday – but it is in an awful state of confusion.' Robert promised to return to County Galway to finish the designs if his mother thought that would help.

Now in his early twenties, Robert was enjoying everything that life in London offered, and in the same letter suggested that living in England was going well. He wrote that if his new accommodation worked out he would like to 'settle permanently' in London.

At art school Robert met Margaret Perry, a bright, pretty fellow student who was three years younger. She came from a well-off family that in the past had produced many lawyers and soldiers. She had mixed ancestry with Welsh, Spanish and French antecedents. Robert and Margaret shared a passion for the arts world and quickly became lovers and constant companions.

Away from the studio Robert continued to play cricket in London, and when he was back home in Ireland he turned out for the Dublin club Phoenix.

In the summer of 1906 he left Slade College and holidayed with his mother in the west of Ireland, where he spent long days painting landscapes. He still wanted to make a living out of being an artist, so he decided to advance his career with a move to Paris. In the French capital he continued his studies by working on learning new techniques of portrait painting. He also kept designing theatre sets, which were regularly used for productions in Ireland.

Robert and Margaret decided to get married, and in September 1907 they became husband and wife after a church service in

London. In a similar way of life to that of his parents, Robert Gregory continued to divide his time between several countries. He and Margaret rented a property in Paris, they bought a house in London, and they often travelled back to the Gregory estate in County Galway.

Cricket dominated much of Robert's spare time, particularly during the summer months in Ireland and in London. He established a reputation for being quite handy as a medium-pace spin bowler and right-handed batsman. His bowling was impressive, and his noted successes included a match against Dublin University in 1908 when he took fifteen wickets. Two years earlier he had managed to take ten wickets in one game.

In 1909 he played in a famous match in Bray for County Galway against Woodbrook, when a bowler from each side took all ten wickets in an innings. Although Gregory's contribution that day was low key, he was capable of scoring runs, and in 1911 for County Galway he notched up two creditable innings of 60 and 63.

A year later, in a match for Phoenix against Dublin University, he scored 59 runs and took nine of his opponent's wickets. He was clearly enjoying his cricket, and his displays at the wicket caught the eyes of the Irish selectors. He was now close to the fringes of the Irish eleven, and although he wasn't initially selected as one of the first-choice players he was getting close to an international call-up. His big chance came in the summer of 1912, just as political tensions in Ireland came to the surface with the 'Home Rule' crisis.

Ireland were scheduled to play Scotland in a game that had been upgraded and was given the status of a first-class match. Three days before it was due to take place two Irish players withdrew, and Gregory and Bill Harrington of Leinster were both called up as replacements. It would prove to be a remarkable debut for Robert Gregory.

The game at Rathmines in Dublin was meant to start on 29 August, but the weather was so bad that no play was possible. The next day the rain largely held off, except for one short downpour, and the outlook was 'bright but unsettled'. The rain meant that the

outfield was wet, and not surprisingly the wicket was in a 'heavy condition'. Although it was an international match between the two countries, at the time Scotland were called 'The Gentleman of Scotland' and likewise the Ireland eleven were similarly referred to as 'The Gentlemen of Ireland'. With the skies holding and the pitch declared playable, it was the visitors who won the toss and elected to bat. Ward, who was Gregory's bowling partner in the opening stages, began the Irish attack with a maiden over. Gregory followed, but he took some time to adjust, and in his first over the Scottish opener Walker scored 5 runs.

Robert persevered, however, and quickly began to take wickets. He got the Scottish opener Storrie out for 9 runs, Dixon was bowled for 3, and Clarke fell for 4. After two and a half hours at the crease the visitors had scored 147 runs, Gregory bowling twenty-three overs, two maidens, and taking eight wickets for 80 runs. It was a superb bowling performance, and Gregory was the star of the Irish attack.

His performance meant that the home side felt confident that they could build up a first innings lead. It wasn't to be. Ireland's batting was poor, and they conceded wickets cheaply. After their first innings they could muster only 98 runs, with Robert Gregory dismissed for a duck.

Fortune favoured Ireland's bowlers during Scotland's second innings, however, and the visitors could manage only 83 runs. Gregory was rested during the Scottish innings and bowled only four overs, but he did take a wicket. Scotland's new tally meant that Ireland needed to score 133 runs to win. At one stage Ireland looked on course to secure a victory, and with just four wickets down the Irish score had reached 93 and it seemed that a home victory was on the cards. Sadly for the small home crowd watching, the Irish batting order again collapsed. Under pressure to score some badly needed runs, Gregory found himself at the crease, where he desperately wanted to make up for his first innings duck.

He was not up to it, and there was more humiliation as he was clean bowled for a duck, which resulted in 'a pair' on his first-class

debut. The embarrassment continued, and Ireland were all out for 128, meaning that Scotland triumphed. It was very close in the end, and for Robert Gregory it was a memorable few days at Rathmines. Although his batting clearly let him down, his bowling figures were impressive, particularly for someone who had never played international cricket before. Gregory grabbed the headlines and was remembered for taking eight wickets, which by any account was an impressive debut.

Whilst his bowling average may have been noted by the watching reporters, he failed to impress the selectors. He would never play for Ireland again, and would go down in Irish cricketing history as a one-match wonder.

1912 marked Robert Gregory's greatest sporting moment in Irish colours, and it was also the year when his artistic talents were recognised.

On two occasions he exhibited a series of paintings and designs at an exhibition in the Baillie Gallery in Mayfair in London. *The Times* commented on his work, saying that he had a 'real gift both for landscape and scenic design'. Life for Robert was rarely dull. Professionally, he was hopeful that the exhibitions would lead to more work. He now had an expanding family, and was the father of three children after the birth of Catherine, who joined her siblings, Richard and Anne. He continued to travel regularly between England and Ireland, and he painted and exhibited his work, which was often put on display alongside other talented artists including Jack Yeats and Paul Henry. In 1913 his latest collection of work was put on view in an Irish exhibition in Whitechapel in London, and the following year he was offered another exhibition at Chelsea.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 changed everything for the Gregory family. When the British government declared that the nation was at war with Germany, his mother was back in County Galway in the family estate at Coole Park.

She greeted the news with a heavy heart since she had great concerns about what the conflict with Germany would mean for family and friends, as well as for the political future of Ireland. She

was passionately in favour of Home Rule and was uneasy about the public stirrings of patriotism for the British Empire. She was not a natural supporter of the war effort, and did not like the simplistic way in which the conflict was being portrayed in the newspapers. It prompted her to write a poem about the futility of war. Entitled 'Pat and Fritz', it was a story about two soldiers, one German and the other British, who kill each other in battle.

Even though Lady Gregory had reservations about the war, she found herself bound up in it because of family connections. Many of her nephews on the Persse side of the family joined British regiments, and Robert told her that he also wanted to go off and fight. It would be some time before Robert would enlist. The Gregorys needed money to pay for the upkeep of the estate, and for some time had been involved in complicated negotiations to sell some land.

In September 1915, just over a year after the war broke out, Robert was in London, and finally enlisted with the Connaught Rangers. As the records stored at the National Archives in London reveal, he neatly filled in the paperwork and had to answer a series of questions about his background and personal history. He applied to be on the 'Special Reserve for Officers', and confirmed that his general health was good, that he had never 'suffered from fits', and that his vision was good. He confirmed that he was thirty-four years old, weighed ten stone and he was able to ride. A captain in the Coldstream Guards, Tony Watts-Russell, who knew Robert well, provided a reference and confirmed that he was of 'good moral character'. Robert's application form was quickly processed, and clearly those who recruited him were pleased with his responses and knew how best they could use the well-spoken Oxford University student. Across the top of Gregory's form an instruction was boldly written that he was 'for eventual transfer to the Flying Corps'.

Robert's decision to enlist came after many months of great turmoil in the Gregory household. In 1914 he began an affair with 23-year-old Nora Summers, who shared his passion for painting and

was a member of the New English Art Club along with her husband, Gerald.

In January 1915, back in County Galway after he had been away in London, he called his wife, Margaret, into the sitting room, and bluntly confessed to the affair. She was devastated, and could barely take in what he told her. They had been married for seven years, had three children, and Margaret was convinced that all was well in their relationship. Margaret was hurt by Robert's infidelity, and over the coming months would record her anger and sadness in her diary.

The Gregorys kept in contact with Nora and Gerald Summers on Robert's insistence, and in June 1915 the couple were guests at Coole Park. On the surface it appeared that the stay went well, but it is very clear from Margaret Gregory's diary that she found the situation extremely uncomfortable and deeply hurtful. She also felt that Robert was humiliating her with his behaviour.

Tension continued to exist between Margaret and Robert. He remained unrepentant about the affair, and even talked about living on his own in London. Margaret tried her best to cope with the situation, and she even had conversations with Robert's lover, Nora, about her feelings. In August, at the time of their daughter Catherine's second birthday, the Gregorys were back at the Coole estate when Robert and Margaret went for a walk. They sat by the lake, and Robert told Margaret that he had been thinking about the war and said that he was finally going to enlist.

It is impossible to know what motivated him to join the war effort, but his reasons may have been varied. For months he watched friends and family join up, and he may have felt some pressure to join the services. His relationship with Margaret was deteriorating, and the opportunity to spend large periods of time away from her doing something 'exciting' was clearly attractive.

Days after he told the family of his decision to enlist, there was more drama for Margaret to witness. Robert insisted that they socialise with Nora and Gerald Summers, and during the encounter tempers flared and Robert hit Gerald. Nora and Gerald promptly left Ireland and returned to London. Margaret Gregory was shocked,

and the next day went to see her mother-in-law, Lady Gregory, and told her exactly what had happened.

Lady Gregory was angered and saddened by her son's actions, and she told Margaret that she felt he had behaved like a 'cad' – strong words from a woman who clearly doted on her only son.

Augusta's description was all the more telling because she had been unfaithful in the early years of her own marriage to Sir William when she had an affair with Wilfrid Blunt. For a while there was some tension between mother and son, and when Lady Gregory left Ireland in October for a lecture tour of the USA she insisted that she did not want Robert to accompany her to the train station. Even though their relationship became strained, Robert and his mother still corresponded regularly when she was in America.

A letter sent in November 1915 by Robert brought his mother up to date with staff developments at Coole Park, land deals and news of the family finances. It is typical of the many chatty letters the two exchanged over the years despite the strain in their relationship. In the note Robert wishes her well in her speaking tour, and said that he would like to hear her deliver her lectures. He also suggested that she should stay in America for as long as she is 'enjoying herself'. Robert signed off as her 'loving son', and, although it is not a particularly affectionate exchange, his letter gives no suggestion that their relationship was permanently damaged.

By January 1916, Robert had left the 4th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers and was now training with the Royal Flying Corps. Aged thirty-four, he was much older than most of his fellow trainee pilots, but his age did not matter. He took to the skies as a natural aviator, and quickly became known as a competent airman. In April of that year Robert was sent to Swingate Down in Dover, where he protected the Kent coastline from German aircraft.

On Easter Monday, Ireland was thrown into turmoil when Irish rebels, led by Padraig Pearse, took over a series of buildings in Dublin including a factory, a hospital, the General Post Office and the Four Courts. Pearse issued a Proclamation of the Irish Republic, and Dublin soon echoed to the sound of gunfire and shelling.

Government forces, which included Irishmen from the Leinster Regiment, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Rifles, were all involved in street battles. The fighting was largely confined to Dublin, but away from the city some barricades were erected and telegraph lines were cut down, although large parts of the country were quiet. The country was thrown into a state of confusion, and rumours were rife about rebels taking over houses and police stations. In Galway, sifting at the family estate at Coole Park, Lady Gregory and Robert's wife were understandably anxious and unsure precisely what was happening. Augusta knew that her politics, her sympathy for Home Rule and her good standing amongst nationalists meant that it was unlikely that the Coole estate would be attacked. However, the Gregory family still had great fears of what would happen in the coming days, and they felt cut off from the outside world.

Across the Irish Sea in Kent, Robert Gregory shared the same feelings of isolation, and he was particularly concerned to find out if his wife, mother and children were safe. He wrote from his base at Swingate Down in Dover to Lady Gregory and said he that was 'very anxious for news from Ireland'. He said that any accounts he had received of the Rising had been censored, so 'everything is left to one's imagination'. He added that he was having great difficulty making contact with her:

> Yesterday I heard that there was no telegraphic communication. I have not heard if they have taken my wire today. [...] It is extraordinary Ireland had seemed to be the one safe place.

He then turned to his family, and said that he had not heard from Margaret but thought that 'she is with you'. He ended his note by telling his mother that he had been on duty recently, and although he had not been flying he had been watching for German Zeppelins as 'reports of their movements were continuously coming in'.

He ended his letter by hoping that he would hear news from home soon.

Robert need not have worried, as Augusta, Margaret and his three children were perfectly safe. After days of shelling and shooting the short-lived rebellion ended when the rebels were outgunned and outmanoeuvred by British forces, and Patrick Pearse surrendered. Around 2,000 rebels had taken part in the Rising, which had cost nearly 500 lives and led to nearly 3,000 people being wounded. The fighting had caused three million pounds worth of damage to Dublin, but the knock-on effect of the events of Easter 1916 would be more than just financial and personal. Within days the behaviour of the rebels was ridiculed and condemned in the press. Many viewed their attempt to overthrow the British authorities as pointless and insignificant, but what they did not know was that the actions of Padraig Pearse and his comrades would change Irish history forever. The British authorities wasted little time in punishing those who took part in the Rising, and within days Pearse and the other leaders of the rebellion had been executed.

Augusta Gregory was upset when she heard of the deaths of Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh. She knew both men as they had written plays that had been performed at her beloved Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Their deaths would have a profound effect on her, and over the coming weeks she would discuss the Easter Rising and the executions in a series of letters with W. B. Yeats.

By the summer of 1916, Robert Gregory's initial pilot training was nearly complete and he was anxious to see action overseas. He was put on standby to be sent to France, but it was a frustrating time because it seemed that every time he expected to be despatched to the front, plans changed and he remained in England.

On 15 July he wrote to Lady Gregory:

> Once more I was told by the adjutant to report to the War Office on Tuesday to go overseas the next day. However, an hour later he told me that I was to

> stop with this squadron, which goes out at the beginning of August.

The next month Gregory finally saw active service as a flying officer, and his war career began in earnest with 40 Squadron when he began flying as a scout pilot in an FE8 over the skies of France. His letters show that he was excited by the overseas posting, but he was realistic enough to know that there was a high chance that he could die.

He knew he needed to put his affairs in order, and wanted to make certain that, if he was killed, Margaret and the children would be well looked after. With this in mind, on 14 September 1916, a year after he joined up, he made a very brief will that was witnessed by two comrades from 40 Squadron. Gregory's instructions were limited to four lines, and stated that he wished to 'leave everything I have to my wife, Margaret'. He also added that he wanted her to have 'the fullest freedom in the upbringing of my children and the management of my house and estate'.

Over the next twelve months of combat with German fighter pilots he would be involved in many dangerous missions over the battlefields of Ypres and the Somme. By the beginning of 1917 Robert was a Flight Commander, based in Belgium, where he was in charge of a number of aircraft. As flying was dependent on the weather, much time was spent on the ground if the aerial conditions were too dangerous to fly. With free time on their hands, Gregory and his comrades decided to put on plays to entertain themselves and keep morale high. On 14 January he wrote to his mother and asked her to send out copies of the play *The Workhouse Ward*, and told her that he was playing a maid in a production of *O'Flaherty VC*. Robert had recently had some home leave and visited the family estate in County Galway. He ended his letter saying that it was 'very nice getting back to Coole and seeing the children so well'.

As Robert and his comrades put on their play he was visited in Belgium by the writer George Bernard Shaw, who was a family friend. Shaw was impressed with Robert's attitude, particularly his ability to remain happy despite the danger and the appalling

conditions in which the men found themselves at the front.

Gregory was at home in the skies. He was now one of the most experienced members of the flying corps, and it seemed that he had learnt the art of self-preservation in a job that had a limited lifespan. His ability to down enemy aircraft was rewarded, and he was given the Military Cross and the Legion d'Honneur. His Military Cross was awarded for displaying 'conspicuous gallantry'. *The Times* reported that 'on many occasions he has at various altitudes, attacked and destroyed or driven down hostile machines'. The honours led to promotion, and he was put in charge of 66 Squadron.

He was pleased with the move, and told his mother 'I am not far from where I was before and under the same Colonel.' He added, 'on the whole I am glad, it is supposed to be a good squadron to be given'.

His new posting meant a move from France to Italy, and by late 1917 Gregory was in Grossa, near Padua, where the 66 Squadron was based. In the New Year, Robert Gregory's good fortune in the skies ran out.

On 23 January 1918 he was at the controls of a Sopwith Camel when he crashed into the ground near a village to the north of Grossa. The precise circumstances of his death have always been surrounded with a sense of mystery. It was originally reported that he crashed because he had passed out at the controls, possibly as a result of feeling unwell following a recent immunisation. However, other reports make it clear that he was shot down by mistake by an Italian pilot. Today, such an incident would be referred to under the oxymoronic banner of 'friendly fire'. The casualty card that is stored in the RAF museum does not give much detail except to state that Gregory was last seen at around 2,000 feet and that his aircraft then 'went into a spin'. The short note adds that his aircraft 'crashed to earth with engine "full on"'. It concluded very starkly that an 'investigation failed to discover cause of accident'.

When the news of his death in Italy was conveyed by telegram to Lady Gregory in Ireland, very little information was passed on, and it was only with the passage of time that more detail surrounding Robert's final moments became clear. His body was taken from the

wreckage, and he was buried at the military cemetery in Padua, where his grave was marked with a simple wooden cross made from the frames of aeroplanes.

The War Office corresponded with Margaret, and after a series of letters she received payments that Robert was owed from his time on active service. In her grief, Augusta turned to W. B. Yeats in the hope that he could write some poetry that would celebrate Robert's life and achievements. Even though Augusta felt that Yeats understood Robert 'better than many', the relationship between her son and the poet had not been a close one. Yeats had a close relationship with Augusta and had been treated royally in the Gregory household over the years. He was given a room in the house to write, and was treated like a member of the family. Robert may have resented his mother's attention to Yeats, and perhaps felt that the poet had replaced him as the 'man of the house'. There was understandably quite an age gap between the two men, and although they had a fondness for the arts, many of Robert's interests such as sport and flying don't appear to have been shared by Yeats. Despite any differences the two men had, Yeats agreed to Lady Gregory's request, and over time produced four poems about Robert.

In March 1918 he presented Augusta with his first poem, which was entitled 'Shepherd and Goatherd'. It was a lengthy piece of work, examining Augusta's grief and looking at the broader themes of loss and disillusionment. It was not received well by the family. Lady Gregory was underwhelmed, and made it clear that Yeats should write another poem. The following month the poet arrived at Coole Park and began work on his second tribute, which he called 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory'. This poem celebrated Robert's life and praised him as a soldier, scholar and horseman.

It was the third poem that Yeats crafted later that summer that became his most celebrated work about the life and death of Robert Gregory. He wrote 'An Irish Airman Foresees his Death', which is a clever short poem in which Gregory's voice speaks directly to the reader. Yeats examines Robert's reasons for enlisting and suggests that he went to fight for his friends and not for some higher national

or military duty. The poet also distanced Robert from any suggestion that he was fighting for Britain, and maintained that he had no personal desire to kill Germans. Yeats wrote:

Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross,
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor.

Later in the sixteen-line poem Yeats essentially portrays Robert as an apolitical figure, even though in his youth he would have been sympathetic to Unionism and would have been very pro-British.

Nor law, nor duty bade me fight
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds.

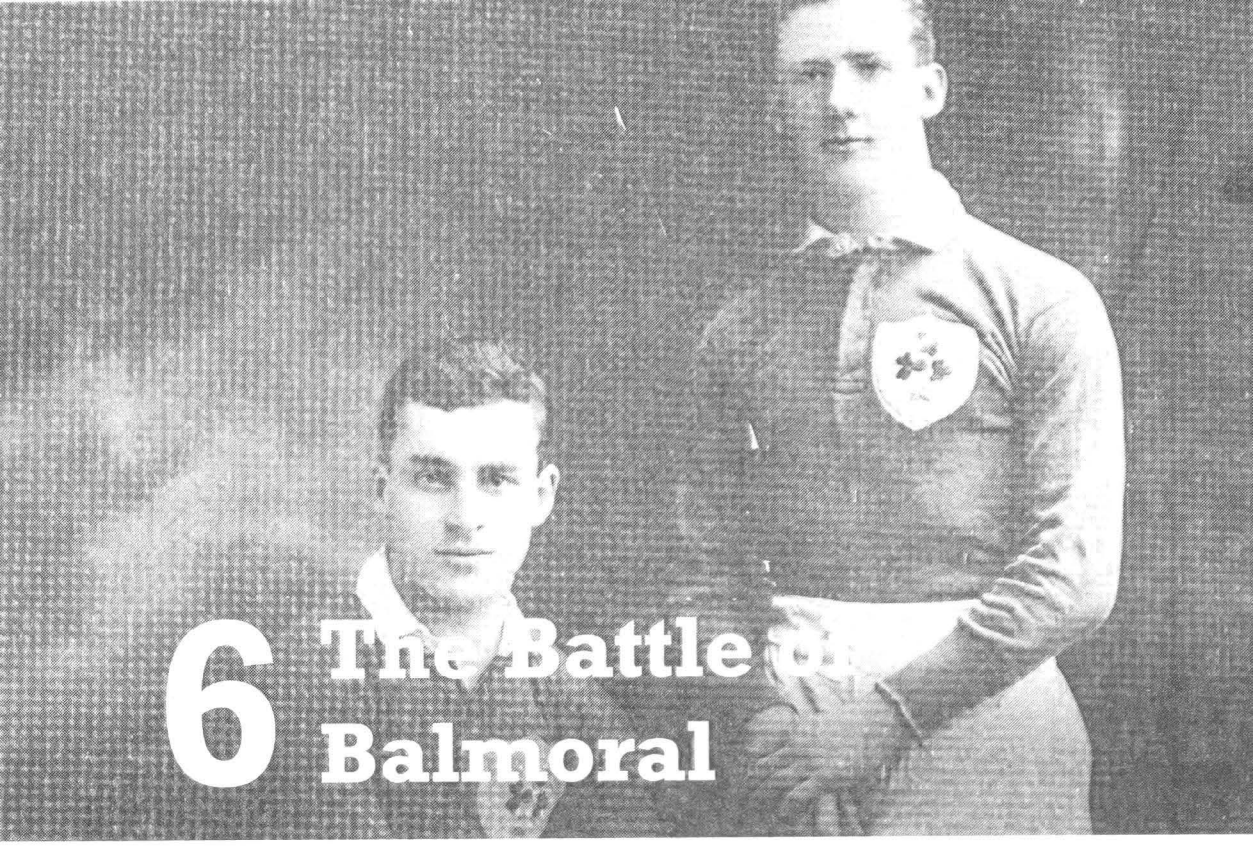
Yeats would write a final poem about Robert in 1920 at a time of great violence in Ireland. Entitled 'Reprisals', Yeats employed the backdrop of recent attacks by the Black and Tans and imagined that Robert had returned to Coole Park from his grave in Italy. Lady Gregory did not like it, thinking it insincere. She was also angered when Yeats sent it to *The Times* to be published without asking her to read it first.

Robert Gregory was a complex character who could display calmness under pressure and exhibit enormous courage. He had his failings, like anyone, and could cause pain and distress to his loved ones, as his behaviour during his affair testifies. He had a privileged upbringing, and could have enjoyed life during the war in his various homes in England and Ireland, but instead he volunteered to fight and placed himself in great danger when others would have opted to remain safe.

His decision to join up was in many ways characteristic of a man who was always prepared to embrace opportunities, whether they were on a cricket pitch, in a studio or on an airfield.

Robert Gregory died doing a job he had grown to love, and as

George Bernard Shaw remarked, he seemed happiest when he was in the air. He enjoyed the thrill of being in a dogfight with an enemy pilot, but he was not reckless and had much to live for when he took to the sky that January day in 1918. Even though Lady Gregory didn't approve of some of the poems W. B. Yeats wrote about her adored son, the poet's writings ultimately achieved what she had wished for. A century on, Ireland's most famous aviator is well remembered. Today, across the world in classrooms, lecture halls and libraries, Robert Gregory is known through the poetry of Yeats. To be glorified in verse by one of the giants of world literature is in itself a remarkable legacy to leave behind.



6 The Battle of Balmoral

'There were times when this game was more like a free fight than scientific rugby football.'

– The *South Wales Argus* on the Ireland versus Wales rugby match, Belfast, 1914.

The rain turned the playing surface into a swamp. An overnight downpour followed by early morning showers meant that large pools of water were dotted all over the pitch. Heavy grey clouds hung over the city, and as spectators converged on the ground in South Belfast the weather showed little sign of improving. As the rain continued it seemed that whoever mastered the conditions would win, but one group of players had another plan.

In the compact surroundings of the Balmoral Showgrounds the Irish team had home advantage, and in front of a partisan crowd they felt they had every chance of defeating the Welsh. Such was the demand for tickets that special trains were laid on for day trippers

from Dublin. Those who could afford first class paid fourteen shillings to make the journey north.

Like their Welsh visitors, Ireland's 1914 Five Nations campaign had produced mixed results. They secured an away win in Paris, lost to England at Twickenham and beat Scotland in Dublin. Wales had also beaten the Scots well in Cardiff, overcome the French, and were narrowly defeated by England at Twickenham.

The Welsh team arrived in Belfast knowing that a defeat would put an end to any thoughts of winning the championship. They did not know at the time that this would be the last contest with the Irish team for six years. Five months later the Great War would begin, and rugby internationals were about to become irrelevant.

Even though the results in the early part of 1914 had not gone in their favour, the Welsh had good reason to think that they would be a match for their hosts. Their pack was one of the most feared in rugby circles, and because of the physical way they played the game their forwards had been given the nickname 'The Terrible Eight'. Their reputation, forged in the valleys of South Wales, often preceded them.

On the night before the game the captain of the Wales team, the Reverend Alban Davies, decided to take his players out for the evening. Davies was a fascinating character. On the pitch he was physically tough, combative and uncompromising, the leader of 'The Terrible Eight'. Away from the game he was a mild-mannered cleric. In the countdown to kick-off he wanted his players to relax for a while and forget about the match that was now less than twenty hours away. Keen to keep his colleagues entertained, he took them to a Belfast theatre. It was meant to be an enjoyable evening away from the pressures of rugby. Unfortunately, his players encountered members of the Irish team, which meant that the chances of a quiet night soon disappeared. Billy Tyrell, a Belfast man and the leader of the Irish pack , also happened to be attending the same performance as Alban Davies' men. He spotted the Welsh team and wanted to talk to members of 'The Terrible Eight'. It did not take long before both sets of players started to tease each other, and there were suggestions

that the game was going to be rough. The verbal sparring appears to have been conducted in good spirit, but it clearly set the mood for the next day's encounter.

The game is remembered not for the rugby but for the violence of the players. It also marked an important moment in the lives of two young Irishmen, Jasper Brett and Vincent McNamara. The nineteen-year-old Brett from Dublin was making his Ireland debut, and although he normally played in the centre the selectors had decided to try him out on the wing. He was a natural athlete who excelled at many sports, and the decision to use him as a winger was most likely taken because of his pace.

Born in Dublin on 8 August 1895, he was the son of William and Mary Brett of Kingstown. Jasper came from a comfortable middle-class family, and his father was a solicitor. The Bretts were well known in Kingstown, and contributed to community life. When the local council sought donations in 1911 to decorate the area in advance of a royal visit, William offered funds.

Jasper was educated at Monkstown Park School in Dublin and the Royal School in Armagh. Sport dominated his early years. At Monkstown Park School he broke athletics records, and excelled on the track when he went to school in Armagh as a boarder. He won the Junior Athletic Cup in 1912, and was a key member of the school's rugby team. Cricket was one of his passions, and he played for a team run by Sir Stanley Cochrane, a wealthy businessman. After he left school he joined his local rugby team, and at just seventeen had established himself as the regular centre for Monkstown Rugby Club.

Brett's debut in Belfast was not entirely unexpected. He had been on the fringes of the national side for a while, and had been part of the Ireland squad that travelled to play France. In Paris, however, the young Dubliner remained on the bench as an unused reserve. As Brett took to the field in Belfast he joined another young player in the early stages of his Irish international career. Vincent McNamara, like Brett, had caught the attention of the selectors in recent months. Four years older than Brett, he was born on 11 April 1891 in

Blackrock in County Cork to Patrick and Margaret McNamara. Schooled at Presentation College in Cork and then at the Christian Brothers College in the city, he was a capable athlete. Physically strong and fit, five feet eight and eleven stone, McNamara's rugby talent was exceptional.

He was an engineering student at University College Cork, and very quickly established himself as a regular in the rugby team. He played his first game as scrum half in November 1911, and partnered fellow student Harry Jack, who played at out half. It was the start of a friendship and a sporting partnership that would prove successful at club, provincial and international level. The pair helped the university win the Dudley Cup, the Munster Senior League and the Cork Charity cup. In 1913 his performances also earned him a place in the Munster senior team. Again, McNamara and Jack were selected for the same team, and by now they had the nicknames of 'Macky and Jack'. McNamara was an unassuming player, carrying his talent easily and modestly.

He had also established a reputation for fairness on the rugby field. One university lecturer who watched him play recalled:

> There never was the shadow of a suspicion about the cleanliness of his play. I will further add this testimony – which few scrum halves could hope to achieve – that I never once in the hundreds of times he put the ball under the scrum under my eye, detected him doing so unfairly. True, he was a terrible fellow for creeping round the scrum and encroaching on the offside rule, but that is no blemish on his character for fair play, and no referee ever heard him utter a questioning word when penalised for such infringements.

For his university team he played a total of seventy-two matches, winning forty-nine, drawing nine and losing fourteen. McNamara loved the game, and often played when others would have rested

because of illness or injury. Days before one important game against Trinity College in Dublin he developed influenza, but because he did not want to let his teammates down he played on. A photograph taken before the game shows a rather pale-faced McNamara in the team line-up. McNamara's desire to help others and his own modesty was clearly apparent when he played rugby. He was talented and had huge sporting ability, but did not put himself above the demands of the team. As one former teacher recalled:

> Any thought of personal distinction never entered his head. The success of the team was his goal, and he cared nothing for scoring tries himself.

The game against Wales at the Balmoral Showgrounds in March 1914 marked McNamara's third Irish cap. His debut had occurred a month earlier on St Valentine's Day at Twickenham in a thrilling match watched by a crowd of 40,000 spectators. King George V, who was a keen rugby fan, and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith were amongst the VIP guests. Minutes before kick-off the two teams were presented to the monarch, and before he returned to his seat in the stand both sets of players wished him well and took part in three cheers for the king.

The match came at a crucial time in Anglo-Irish relations. It took place as the House of Commons was debating Home Rule for Ireland, and there had been fears that the occasion would be used as a focal point for demonstrators. In the end the match was remembered for sporting reasons rather than political ones. McNamara was not the only debutant on show that afternoon. Arthur Harrison made his English debut, and attracted much praise in the press for his play. At the outbreak of war he joined the Royal Navy, and he was killed in action in April 1918. He would be posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross in 1919.

Five of the English side who played Ireland on that February day would die in the Great War, including Ronald William Poulton-Palmer, one of England's finest players. Ireland took the lead in the

game, but England fought back, with the visitors finally losing 17–12. It was a frustrating day for the Irish, but it seems that Vincent McNamara acquitted himself well. One report stated that:

> McNamara the scrum half did not have many chances and when he did the three quarters through lack of pace were unable to take advantage of their chances, but he was quick in following up.

The match at Twickenham marked the first time a Munster scrum half had played for Ireland, and within days the young man from Blackrock in County Cork would get another opportunity.

When the team was announced for the Scotland game, McNamara was once again in the side. The game against the Scots in Dublin was a personal triumph for the Corkman. McNamara played alongside Harry Jack at international level for the first time. It was a proud moment for both families, but also for University College Cork, which could now boast that it had two internationals in its ranks. The 'Macky and Jack' partnership paid off on a wet, miserable day at Lansdowne Road. The two men were instrumental in helping Ireland beat Scotland 6–0, with McNamara scoring one of the Irish tries.

The combination of the two boys from Cork clearly impressed the press. One newspaper report praised them, saying that Jack had displayed both 'skill and pluck', while McNamara had 'performed his duties as scrum-half very smartly'.

A fortnight later, the two Cork men came together for the Wales game in Belfast along with Jasper Brett, who finally got his chance after being a substitute for the encounter in Paris with France. Brett, McNamara and Jack would take part in a game that to this day is regarded as the most violent rugby match between Ireland and Wales, when the friction that was witnessed when Irish and Welsh players met at the Belfast theatre the previous evening quickly resurfaced.

Within the opening minutes, as the rain lashed down, the Irish

team decided to get their retaliation in first. The chief agitator was Irish pack leader Billy Tyrell, who had exchanged words with Welshman Percy Jones the night before. The Ulsterman took matters into his own hands, and his target was predictable. Stocky, powerful and with broad shoulders, Tyrell had the physique to challenge members of 'The Terrible Eight'. As Percy Jones recalled: 'We did not have long to wait before the fireworks started. In the first few minutes Tyrell got me and everything inside my head rattled.'

Tyrell's punch was the first of many that were traded between opposing players. Soon it seemed that every player on the pitch was involved in a fist fight or scuffle. Tyrell and Jones had a series of fights, and none of the incidents led to penalties or action by the Scottish referee, Mr J. Tulloch. Rugby correspondent W. J. Townsend Collins watched the game for the *South Wales Argus*. He recalled:

> Enough happened under the very nose of the referee and in full view of the Press to justify the ordering off of half a dozen players. Scores of times men were tackled and flung to the ground when they were yards from the ball; frequently blows were exchanged; there were times when this game was more like a free fight than scientific Rugby football.

At half-time, Tyrell and Jones exchanged words. The Belfast man claimed that he was 'two up' over his rival. Welshman Jones agreed, but promised revenge. The 'Battle of Balmoral' continued in the second half, with fights and scuffles across the pitch. The numerous off-the-ball incidents gave the watching press corps much to record. Another reporter recorded the fighting in a diplomatic way by stating that:

> A good many hard knocks were given and received and now and then feeling among the players ran high.

The game did not go Ireland's way, and in the closing stages they lost two players to injury. One had to leave the field with twenty minutes to go, and another went off with three minutes left after he suffered concussion when he was thrown against one of the goalposts. The rough play was now beginning to take its toll, and Ireland finished the game with just thirteen players on the pitch. Billy Tyrell and his men had tried to take on 'The Terrible Eight' at their own game, but the plan had failed.

At full-time the visitors had chalked up a goal and two tries against Ireland's sole try, making the Welsh 11–3 winners. For Jasper Brett and Vincent McNamara, the Wales game must have been an eye opener. Largely inexperienced at international level, it is unlikely they had ever witnessed such violence before. One correspondent said that McNamara and Jack gave a 'display of undisguised roughness that is happily rare in Internationals'. Another journalist gave the 'Macky and Jack' partnership a glowing report:

> Jack and McNamara experienced a terrible time of it behind the scrum, but both came through with flying colours, and gave a display of gameness and pluck that could not be excelled.

As the players trudged off the pitch bruised, tired and soaking wet, Billy Tyrell and Percy Jones spoke to each other. The Irishman congratulated his opponent, saying 'You are the best Welshman I've ever run across and you are the only man who ever beat me.' That night all the players joined together in a celebratory meal. There are conflicting reports on how the evening went. One account suggests that during the combined get-together all rivalries were put aside and Billy Tyrell and Percy Jones, the day's main protagonists, signed each other's menu cards as a reminder of the day. Another report contained in Tyrell's obituary published in 1968 suggests otherwise, claiming that the friction between the Belfast man and his Welsh counterpart continued after the meal.

Either way, a friendship was forged in the mud of South Belfast,

and in later years the two men would often meet up as spectators at Wales and Ireland encounters. On one occasion when Tyrell was president of the Irish Rugby Football Union he insisted that his old adversary sat beside him as they watched a game.

Tyrell saw military service during the Great War and the Second World War. His bravery would be honoured with a Military Cross, a Distinguished Service Order and a Croix de Guerre. He was a warrior on the field and off it. He would later be knighted and become an air vice-marshal and surgeon to King George VI. Of the thirty men who played during the match in Belfast, sixteen took part in the Great War. Nine came from Welsh ranks, and seven Irish players enlisted.

The Wales match at the Balmoral Showgrounds marked the end of an era. It was the last game between the teams before the war broke out in August 1914, and it heralded the end of a number of international careers. Three of those who played that day would fight in the Great War and never return home. The Welsh forward Dai Watts, a member of 'The Terrible Eight' who was capped four times in 1914, would die in 1916 on the Western Front. His body would never be recovered. 'The Terrible Eight', which successfully tormented teams from the other four nations, would never appear again.

Jasper Brett and Vincent McNamara also never played again for Ireland. Brett's appearance in 'The Battle of Balmoral' would be his only Irish cap. He spent the summer of 1914 working in Dublin in his father's solicitors firm, and when war was declared in August the nineteen-year-old volunteered to go and fight.

The young Dubliner knew exactly what regiment he wanted to join and who he wanted to serve with. From his cricket-playing days Brett knew Frank Browning, who played cricket for Ireland and was president of the Irish Rugby Football Union. Browning sent a circular to rugby clubs in Dublin asking them to urge their members to join up and fight. Brett joined 'D' company of the 7th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who carried out their drill practice at Lansdowne Road. Many of the men who were well educated turned

down the option of an officer's commission, insisting that they wanted to have a similar rank to their peers.

Time was in short supply, and on Wednesday 16 September Jasper Brett and his new comrades marched through Dublin to cheering crowds. They took the train to the Curragh, and at 5 p.m. that night the raw recruits received a welcome into the regiment by Colonel Geoffrey Downing, who, like Jasper Brett, was a former player with Monkstown. The next few months would be spent weapon training, drilling and marching.

There was still time for a bit of rugby, however, and in October Jasper Brett played in a match in the familiar surroundings of Lansdowne Road with other members of the Volunteer Corps. Brett impressed his superiors, and he clearly had an aptitude for weapons because in December 1914 he was transferred to the Machine Gun Section of 'B' company.

New Year brought a change of surroundings, and in February he and his comrades were moved from the Curragh to the Royal Barracks in Dublin. Phoenix Park became the venue for trench warfare training, and the men used Dollymount Beach for weapons exercises. In April the news that they had all been expecting for weeks finally arrived. The 7th Battalion were to be sent to Basingstoke in Hampshire for final training before being posted overseas. On 30 April on a warm afternoon the men made one final march through the streets of Dublin to North Wall. With fixed bayonets and accompanied by the regimental band of the 12th Lancers and young pipers from Trinity College Officers' Training Corps, it was a noisy and colourful affair.

Thousands of people lined the streets to see the men march, shouting encouragement and applauding as the massed ranks marched by. At the Four Courts barristers and solicitors took a break from work and watched and shouted approval. A large group gathered at O'Connell Bridge, and as the troops went by hats and handkerchiefs were waved continuously. Some well-wishers rushed from the pavements and thrust sweets, cigarettes and rosaries into the hands of the soldiers. For the men of the 7th Battalion it was an

emotional time as they spotted friends and family in the crowd, and marched past offices and courtrooms they had once worked in. It was a fitting occasion as Dubliners came out in force to say goodbye to their own. It would be one of the last big public displays of the British Empire on the streets of Dublin. A year later the city would witness the sights and sounds of armed rebellion. *The Irish Times* said that the 7th Dublin Fusiliers final march went ahead with 'continuous cheering', and that it showed that Dublin 'pulsates with ardent enthusiasm for the cause of the Allies'. The paper also remarked on the number of sportsmen filling the ranks of the 7th Battalion:

> Its composition is symbolical of the part that sport plays in war. Men who were prominent in the football field, and whose prowess was admired every Saturday at Lansdowne Road and other football centres, have thrown aside their interest in sport and devoted themselves purely to the affairs of war, in order that Ireland and other parts of the Empire may be free from the horrors of war.

At North Wall a passenger steamer was waiting to transport the men to Holyhead in Wales. After the emotion-filled march there was one last act before the men set sail. Frank Browning, who had been the inspiration behind the establishment of the 'Pals Battalion', was there to meet the men at the quayside. He knew many of the men on board, including his friend Jasper Brett, and wanted to wish them well. It would be the last time they would ever see him. Within a year Browning would be dead, shot during the Easter Rising of April 1916. Browning was the last to leave the boat. He came ashore, and in the fading light watched as the 'Pals Battalion' sailed away from Dublin. Many on board would never see the city again.

The training continued for two months in Basingstoke, and on 27 June the order came that the men were to set sail for war. It would take three weeks before they would arrive at Gallipoli, a journey that

would see them stop off at Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, and finally the Dardanelles. The voyage got off to a good start, and the men were in fine form as they had plenty of good food, which was different from normal rations. The sea air and daily runs around the deck helped them to stay fit.

In late July they arrived at the island of Lemnos in Mudros Bay, and from there they transferred to Mitylene, which was about 120 miles from Suvla Bay, their final destination. At Mitylene time was spent doing route marches around the bay, but there was also an opportunity for recreation too, and the men enjoyed swimming and bathing in the warm waters. On Sunday 1 August men from the 6th and 7th Battalions of the Dublin Fusiliers joined forces and put on a concert party for 300 sailors from a French battleship. It would prove to be the last hurrah for many of the Dublin pals.

Within days, soldiers from the two battalions got instructions to pack all their equipment, get their rifles and ammunition ready and have two days' rations in their haversacks. They left Mitylene by boat, and at first light on a fine morning the men arrived in Suvla Bay. Around 6 a.m. the landings began, and a series of landing craft, each packed with 300 troops, headed for the shore.

The Turkish guns were in full flight, and shells rained down, making a terrifying noise, as the landing craft moved towards the beach. One group from the 7th Dublins was hit, suffering severe casualties. Clutching his rifle and wearing his pack, Jasper Brett made it ashore safely and landed at 'C' beach, which was a white, pebbly strand. As the soldiers landed on the beach they were instructed to take cover, and many men took refuge on the slopes of the low cliffs at Lala Baba on the southern tip of Suvla Bay.

Jasper Brett described the landing in a letter home to his parents:

> We landed under shell-fire and one man was killed and several wounded before we landed at all. We had to carry our machine guns. After a couple of hundred yards we abandoned our oil sheets,

> blankets and packs. We had to cross a stretch of heavy sand about 400 yards or so from where we left our packs, it seemed miles. They had the range perfectly and the casualties were heavy.
>
> When one hears a shell screaming one falls flat; well I fell flat several times and then one time I did not, the ground was torn up in front of me; the man in front was wounded in the neck. Poor Marrable was killed on my right [Sgt Francis Marrable, a fellow Dublin soldier]. Eventually we crossed this death trap. We proceeded, and some of the wounded were awful sights.

As the morning progressed, more battalions arrived on the beach and the casualties mounted. All around the bay were the dead and the dying. The lighters that had brought the men in were now being used to ferry the wounded back out.

Brett's battalion was given the task of trying to capture Chocolate Hill, which was so called because of the colour of the clay. The hill was defended by Turkish artillerymen, and was seen by the British as a key stronghold that needed to be captured if the initial landings were to succeed. The Dublin Pals moved quickly through hedgerows and ploughed fields and then arrived at the base of Chocolate Hill, which was dominated by a series of cleverly built trenches. By now the Turkish defenders had retreated to the summit of the hill, so the ascent was quicker than first anticipated.

With members of other Irish regiments, the Dubliners climbed the mountain and prepared for the final assault. For the men who made it to the summit there were feelings of relief and great pleasure that they had captured some ground on a day that had been dominated by so much horror and carnage. As night fell the full picture of how many had died began to emerge. Initial figures indicated that a hundred members of the 7th Battalion were either dead, injured or could not be found. It also appeared that twenty-two members of Brett's Pals Battalion were casualties. The dead were

collected, burial parties were organised, and the Dubliners who had died were buried together at the foot of Chocolate Hill.

It was a similar story for other Irish regiments.

On 11 August, Lieutenant Colonel H.F. Jourdain, who commanded the 5th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, wrote candidly in his diary:

> The sight of our camp at 4 a.m. this morning was terrible, wounded and dying men all over the place. Men groaning and dying without a murmur. I assisted as many as possible but it was too horrible to contemplate.

The next few days established a depressing routine for the Dublin Fusiliers. Casualties continued to mount, and although there were some temporary successes it was obvious that the Turkish forces were stronger, better equipped and better organised. Despite the mounting death toll, more attempts were made to seize ground from the Turkish troops.

After the success of taking Chocolate Hill, Brett's battalion was involved in the battle for Kizlar Dahg, which was a range of hills along the shore of the Gulf of Saros. The Dublin Fusiliers, the Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Irish Fusiliers were all involved in the attack, and by 15 August it was in British hands. Brett's role in the attack at Chocolate Hill and Kizlar Dahg was noticed by his superiors. The young Dubliner was clearly leadership material, and on the recommendation of Captain C.B. Hoey he applied for a temporary commission.

In mid August, however, thoughts of a new job were far from his mind. Like many of his comrades, Brett's health had deteriorated as he coped with daily life in Gallipoli. He suffered badly from enteritis and colitis, and his condition got so bad that he was hospitalised. The news did not filter back to Dublin for some time, and Brett's sister Mabel was so concerned in October 1915 about her brother that she contacted the Infantry Record Office in Exeter:

> We have not heard from him since 31 August. At that time he had just come out of hospital. We have heard since, unofficially, that he is back in hospital with dysentery. We are very concerned to hear something definite and would be very grateful if you could let us know if he is in hospital.

Brett left behind a battalion that was depleted and bloodied. The Allies' attack at Suvla Bay had proved to be a futile exercise; too ambitious, poorly executed and badly planned. In September 1915, as a direct result of his Gallipoli actions, Jasper Brett became a 2nd lieutenant in the 7th Battalion, and his promotion even made it to the pages of *The Irish Times*.

Just as Brett's military exploits were being recognised, so too were the activities of his old Irish teammate Vincent McNamara. Coincidentally, the twenty-four-year-old Cork man was also in Gallipoli as part of the Allied offensive. McNamara was keen to use his engineering background, so had joined the Corps of the Royal Engineers straight from University College Cork. He had done his initial training in Chatham in England, and when he and a college-mate left home to join up they were cheered by around 200 students who marched to Cork Railway Station carrying the university flag. By 1915 he had become a well- respected second lieutenant, highly regarded by his fellow officers.

McNamara had originally joined the 136 Army Troops, and in Gallipoli he requested a move to one of the units responsible for laying mines. On 29 November he was working underground in an area called Fusiliers Bluff when he became aware that the Turkish forces were also working nearby. The Turkish soldiers pushed gas towards the British lines, McNamara went to investigate, and responded by placing a mine close to them. He then went back underground to see what had happened, but had not left enough time for the gas to disperse, and he was overcome by fumes. Despite efforts by his comrades to revive him, it was to no avail, and

McNamara was pronounced dead.

In December 1915 the dreaded War Office telegram arrived at the McNamara family home in Blackrock in County Cork. It simply stated:

> Deeply regret to inform you that Lieutenant Vincent McNamara R E (Royal Engineers) died 29th November gassed from his own explosive.
> Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.

The news devastated the McNamara family and prompted a series of questions. Vincent's father, Patrick, began correspondence with officials in the War Office in London, and his letters movingly illustrate the personal heartbreak caused by war. Patrick wrote about how proud the family were of Vincent's academic and sporting achievements, particularly his appearances in the Irish international rugby team. He explained how Vincent's death has been a 'great blow', stating that Vincent was his 'best and brightest son'. He also asked the War Office to consider a pension as Vincent did 'his part well'.

McNamara's death shocked many who remembered him from his college days or from his rugby appearances. Harry Jack who partnered him at half back for twelve years at university, province and country, wrote:

> I can not possibly forget those memorable days of our friendship, when we shared the ups and downs of a football career, in which he always bore the brunt of attack to make my way easy and to make me conspicuous.

One of McNamara's former lecturers in Cork wrote an obituary that was published by the university. He said: 'The name of Vincent McNamara will remain the standard of all that is lovely, honourable and good.'

In the final weeks of 1915, Vincent McNamara was buried in Gallipoli, and today his name is commemorated on the Lancashire Landing Memorial. The McNamara family received many sympathy letters from Vincent's former classmates and teachers and in December 1915 they placed an acknowledgement of thanks in the *Cork Examiner.*

By the time Vincent McNamara died, Jasper Brett had left Gallipoli. The 7th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were evacuated, landing first on the island of Mudros, and then arriving in Salonika on 24 October. The battalion that walked ashore looked nothing like the group of men who had left Dublin to the sound of cheering crowds some five months earlier. They were weary, and many were desperate for a rest. Some were understandably mentally and emotionally scarred from first watching their friends die and then having to bury them. Their numbers told the story of Gallipoli in stark terms. The company of Dublin Pals that landed on Suvla Bay had once boasted nearly 240 men; now it was reduced to just seventy-nine.

At the end of November 1915, Winston Churchill accepted that his ambitious plan to get the Allies to Constantinople would not work, and within weeks all the Allied forces in Suvla Bay, Anzac Cove and Cape Helles were withdrawn.

From Salonika, men from the 10th Irish Division were sent to Serbia to the shores of Lake Dorian to prepare for a battle with the Bulgarian Army. The terrain was as hostile as the weather, and the men had to take shelter in deep gullies with barren rock and limited vegetation. Within days the weather took a serious turn for the worse, and torrential rain was followed by a blizzard. The temperatures dropped dramatically, and since many of the men had the wrong clothes and equipment they were unprepared for the wintry onslaught. Dozens of Irish soldiers suffered exposure and frostbite, and had to be evacuated to hospitals in Salonika.

The horrors of warfare were now beginning to take a toll on Jasper Brett. By 1916 he was based in Serbia, and the twenty-one-year-old had witnessed death at first hand. He had gone into battle against

the Turkish and Bulgarian forces and had seen many of his friends die. He started to suffer shell shock, and in June was taken to a hospital in Malta. His condition was so severe that the medical authorities decided that the young soldier would be better getting treatment back in England. He was put on a ship in the late summer of 1916 and returned to Britain. Jasper Brett's war was over, but his personal battles were still raging.

In August he was admitted to Latchmere House, a hospital in Richmond in Surrey that specialised in treating service personnel with shell shock. It soon became apparent that Jasper's stay in hospital would not be a brief one. It also became clear that there was little chance of him returning to the ranks of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, or any other regiment. For five months he was treated by doctors, and then in January 1917 he was discharged by the hospital authorities, who declared that he was unfit for military service. By now Jasper had resigned his commission, and he returned as a civilian to the family home in Kingstown in Dublin. Jasper's father, William, hoped that his son could lead a normal life again, and no doubt was heartened when he was told by a doctor in London that his son 'would recover'. Back in the family home in Dublin Jasper initially appeared ill, and a local doctor advised William to put his son 'under restraint'. On one occasion an ambulance was called, but Jasper caused 'a scene' and refused to go to hospital. By early February it appeared that Jasper was improving, and his family felt that he was making a 'good recovery'.

On Sunday 4 February 1917 Jasper wrote to a friend, and without explanation said 'water was my bête noire'. He then asked that everyone should think of him 'as I once was', and concluded with the words 'God's will be done'. He signed it 'J.T. 'It was his last message.

At 8.45 p.m. Jasper left the family home at Crosthwaite Park and went for a walk. An hour later the train from Westland Row left Dalkey Station, and as it passed through a tunnel known as the Khyber Pass the driver experienced a jolt to the train. When the train pulled into the next stop the driver sent a message back to Dalkey asking his colleagues there to investigate the matter. When railway

staff went into the tunnel they came across Jasper's body. It appears that he had placed himself on the track and the train had run over him. The wheels of the train had severed his head from his body. A doctor was called, and the Brett family were informed. They would discover that he was wearing the Silver War Badge he had received some weeks earlier.

At the inquest at Dalkey Railway Station, officials from the railway company, police officers and Jasper's father, William, all gave evidence. William Brett talked about Jasper's final message and explained how his son had seen service in Gallipoli and Serbia and how he had been 'a most popular officer'.

The jury returned a verdict that Jasper Brett had 'committed suicide' by putting himself on the railway line. They exonerated the railway company from blame, saying that Jasper should not have been discharged from Latchmere Hospital because in their view 'he was insane'. They expressed sympathy for William Brett and the rest of the family.

William wanted Jasper's medals, and he wrote to the War Office in London asking if they could be sent to Dublin. In one letter he wrote of how his son felt about leaving the military:

> It simply broke his heart to be turned out in mufti, without any medal to show he had served. He went through great hardship and danger and hardship also, and I have the letters to show that.

William Brett's letters bear a striking similarity to the ones sent by Patrick McNamara to the War Office following the death of Vincent. They both wrote of how proud they were of their sons and how they wanted some recognition for the service their children had given – two fathers united by a common grief. Eventually, three medals were despatched to the Brett home.

Jasper was buried in the family plot in Deansgrange Cemetery in Dublin, and his grave was inscribed with the words 'Thy will be done'. After the war ended Jasper's name was included on a memorial

at Christ Church in Dun Laoghaire. The McNamara family presented Vincent's Ireland shirt to University College Cork and today it is on public view in the city. Jasper Brett is remembered by Monkstown Rugby Club and today in one of the club rooms his photograph is proudly displayed.

The young Dubliner and his teammate Vincent McNamara lived similar lives. They were talented sportsmen from an early age, at school, club and international level. They volunteered to fight, became lieutenants and saw service in the same theatre of war. They died in different ways, thousands of miles apart, but their deaths had the same impact.

Their families were devastated, and Irish rugby lost two of its brightest stars.

7 Ireland's Lost Champion

'He was by all odds the greatest golfer in Ireland.'
– American Golf magazine on Michael 'Dyke' Moran, Irish Golf Champion

Two hours' drive from Paris, buried in a Commonwealth War Grave, a young Irishman is at peace and surrounded by his comrades. Flowers and shrubs bring dashes of colour to the lines of neat white headstones, and beyond the cemetery you can see the countryside that was once fought over at such a terrible cost. The burial ground sits beside a busy road and is home to hundreds of British and German soldiers and a number of Russians. Until October 1918, the final weeks of the Great War, this was German territory, and when the fighting subsided British troops who had been killed in the adjoining fields were laid to rest by their German foes.

Some of the casualties were interred amongst the trees whilst others were placed in ground that now lies in the shadow of a large

stone cross erected long after the armistice. This air was once filled with the sounds of battle, but today the calm is interrupted only by birdsong and the rumble of traffic.

If you take a walk past the names of the young men from Manchester and Lincolnshire you will eventually find plot I.B.32. It contains the remains of Private Michael Moran, who saw action at the Battle of The Lys as British troops tried to take the area out of German hands.

Under the insignia of the Royal Irish Regiment, Moran's personal details are etched into the Portland stone revealing his name and the date of his death, but these economical facts do not record the other life of soldier 25619.

He was the finest Irish golfer of his generation, and for nearly a century the Dubliner has lain in Le Cateau Military Graveyard, north-east of Paris, not far from where he died in April 1918.

Moran was small in stature but a giant of Irish golf, and dominated the game in Ireland before the Great War, holding the Irish professional championship a record-breaking five times from 1909 to 1913. His talent was not confined to the island of Ireland and he often exhibited it on a wider stage, notably at Hoylake in 1913 when he became the first Irishman to win prize money at the British Open. Had luck not deserted him he would have won the tournament, but one bad round put paid to his chances and a place in golfing history.

Despite that experience, Moran's story and his progression from humble beginnings to sporting star reads like a novel, though success rested easily and modestly on his shoulders.

Michael Moran had a difficult start in life. He was born in 1886 in a one- roomed cottage with a tin roof that stood close to the links at Royal Dublin Golf Club. He lived in an area known as Curley's Yard, which was named after his grandfather, Patrick Curley, and the Moran home was situated close to the third and thirteenth holes. His surroundings not surprisingly inspired his choice of sport and he had a natural talent, spending his early years as a child watching and playing the game. He was a deceptive player with a slight frame who

putted well and was able to drive the ball down the fairway with impressive power.

In his early days he was given the nickname 'Dyke', though the origins of this moniker are not clear. The journalist and golf writer Dermot Gilleece suggests that the name may have come from Moran's penchant for jumping over ditches or dykes, or it might be a reference to a golfing term. The term 'Dyke' was also apparently Dublin slang for scoring a birdie two on a par-three hole. Whatever the origins of the nickname, for most of his life he was known as Michael 'Dyke' Moran. His golfing career began in earnest when he started work as a caddie, and after a spell in Dundalk he finally came home to Royal Dublin as an assistant. His style and manner won him many admirers, and his play prompted a correspondent in *Golf Illustrated* to write: 'I am convinced that Moran is one of the most consistently brilliant players I have seen on the Royal Dublin course.'

In 1907 his success on the course was rewarded when he was selected to play for Ireland in a match against Scotland. Moran was captured in the official photograph with his teammates, who included players from Royal Portrush, Malone and Portmarnock. Looking very serious for the camera, members of the Irish squad all look very similar in their suits and boots, many sporting fashionable handlebar moustaches. On the back row, and looking very youthful, Michael Moran stands out as the clean-shaven, baby-faced member of the team.

In the same year the inaugural Irish Professional Golf Championship took place in Portrush, and along with the top golfers in the country Moran made the journey to the County Antrim resort. At only twenty-one years of age he was one of the youngest competitors, and even though he was inexperienced he played like a veteran, securing a top-four finish.

When the championship was played in the County Down town of Newcastle two years later he was in even better form. By 1909 Moran was playing like an established professional, and after seeing off a series of opponents he secured a place in the thirty-six-hole final against Harry Kidd, who was a professional at the Royal County

Down Club. Kidd and Moran knew each other's style of play since they had been teammates back in 1907 when they turned out together for Ireland against Scotland for the Springvale Bowl.

In difficult driving conditions caused by high winds, Kidd took an early lead and played the better golf. As the final wore on, however, Moran's game improved and he secured the match 9 and 7 to win his first ever Irish championship. Moran's elevation to champion status brought much coverage in the press, and he soon became the golfer against whom visiting professionals wanted to play.

Harry Vardon, one of game's leading players, and the winner of the US Open in 1900, was golf's first international star. He was a regular visitor to Ireland and he came to play exhibition matches and professional tournaments. Three months after Moran's historic win in County Down, Vardon and the new Irish champion met in a match at Delgany Golf Club in County Wicklow. With breathtaking views of the sea and the Wicklow Mountains it is one of the most picturesque courses in Ireland and provided a wonderful backdrop to an encounter between two of the game's leading players.

A large crowd travelled to witness the contest, with many making the journey by horse-drawn carriage from Dublin. Hundreds of spectators lined the course, and they were treated to a close contest. After the morning round there was only one shot in it, Vardon completing the course in 77 compared to Moran's round of 78. The afternoon's play continued in the same vein, but by the close Vardon narrowly beat Moran, his score of 71 equalling the record for the course. He later admitted that although he had won he had driven 'like a lion but putted like a lamb'. The match at Delgany marked the start of a series of personal duels that the two men would have over the next five years. It also marked the moment when Michael Moran had arrived as a serious player in the world of golf.

Nine months later, in June 1910, the young Dubliner had the pleasure of defending his Irish Championship title on his home patch at Royal Dublin. The championship rules were changed and the competition was based on stroke play rather than match play, as had

been the case when Moran first became a champion in 1909. Over two days on the course that he knew so well Moran was boosted by some loyal supporters, and he did not disappoint his friends. He played some superb golf, registering a course record, going around the eighteen holes in an impressive 72.

The following day he improved with a round of 70, and by the close of play he was well ahead of his nearest rival. Not surprisingly, he retained the championship with some ease. One newspaper reporter wrote:' There can be now no doubt that the young Royal Dublin professional is in a class by himself in Irish golf.'

Moran's back-to-back victories in the Irish Championship firmly established the Dubliner as the top golfer in Ireland and one of the most talented players in the British Isles. He began playing in tournaments in England and Scotland and entered the Open Championship in 1909, 1910 and 1911. Although he did not win any prize money, his performances showed that he was improving year on year. In the 1911 Open at Sandwich he recorded the best round on the first day's play when he secured an impressive 72.

In the same year he made the familiar journey north to Portrush to defend his Irish professional championship. The weather on the County Antrim course was poor and the players had to battle rain and strong winds blowing in from the sea. When the conditions allowed the competitors to take to the fairways, Moran led the way. Despite strong opposition from local golfer James Edmundson, the reigning champion triumphed for the third year in a row. Firmly established as the player every Irish golfer wanted to beat, Moran's driving and putting style became the subject of much analysis in magazines and newspapers.

The Connacht Tribune described the way the Dubliner played:

> He drives almost like a catapult. There is no pause. He draws back with swift deliberation and seems to follow through with lightning-like rapidity. He preserves a perfect balance on his finish, and the head is only half lifted, as if he were still watching

> the place where the ball had been. Meanwhile the ball is floating away at medium height from the ground in a deadly straight line.

Despite his physique, Moran was a deceptive player and had a great ability to hit the ball far with precision, and he clearly had the right mental attitude to tackle the game, as his fellow competitor J.H. Taylor, who won the 1913 Open, recalled: 'Mike Moran, a small wiry type of Irishman, was a fine player and like most of his race a rare tryer and typically enthusiastic.'

Moran it seems had no great desire to study the technical aspects of the game, and there is no record of him ever analysing his swing or changing his style to increase his success at putting. Today the art of improving your golf technique has become a multi-billion-pound industry, but a century ago Michael Moran had a more direct and perhaps simplistic approach to the game. He was quoted as saying: 'I do not know how I play the strokes; all I know is that the ball is there and I hit it.'

In 1912 and 1913 he once again retained the Irish Professional Championship, and his final triumph at Portmarnock marked his fifth tournament victory in succession. It was in Britain, however, where Moran really wanted to win, and by 1912 it seemed that he was beginning to make real progress in his attempts to win prize money at the Open.

In the championship at Muirfield in June of that year he found himself up against some tough opposition that included his old adversary, Harry Vardon. Moran started well, and after a series of accurate drives and good work on the greens, at one stage he was leading the field. His consistency let him down, however, and a series of mistakes pushed him down the leader board and out of contention. Despite his early form he again returned to Dublin empty-handed.

The experience at Muirfield was not wasted, and the next year marked Moran's greatest performance at the Open. He travelled to Hoylake and joined 269 hopefuls as they battled to win golf's

ultimate prize.

This time Moran improved on his previous outing, putting in a wonderful performance. At the halfway stage in the second round he was just three strokes behind the Open Champion, Ted Ray. Moran was in a brilliant position, and if he continued to play well it seemed likely that he could mount a serious challenge for the much-sought-after claret jug. The press sensed that the conclusion of the competition would be very exciting, and Moran's strong performance had added to the drama. A correspondent with the *American Golfer* magazine wrote:

> The name of Michael Moran was in few people's minds on the Monday night, but he was then only three strokes behind Ray and only two behind Taylor, and those who knew his game knew that he was good enough to win the championship.

The beginning of the third round was crucial, and in windy and rainy conditions in front of a small crowd Moran walked to the opening tee knowing that he had to perform strongly. As the rain lashed down the biggest challenge was probably keeping a grip of his club, though the weather was only part of his problem.

Moran's round began disastrously, and on the opening hole he managed to put his ball out of bounds. The misery continued. His next shot went into the bunker, and it took him a number of efforts to get out of the sand. By the time he got to the green and finished the hole he was in double figures. The third round effectively ended his championship hopes, but undeterred he took to the course for the final round in an attempt to climb up the rankings. His final performance in front of the crowd at Hoylake was impressive, and he repeated his earlier form and managed to finish in joint third with Harry Vardon. Moran's third placing meant that he became the first ever Irishman to receive prize money at the Open.

He returned to Ireland as a history-maker with the grand sum of £12 in his back pocket. His achievement was noted in the press, and

whilst it was accepted that his poor third round had destroyed any chance of success, his play in the other rounds was commended. Many observers of the game felt that Moran was on the cusp of greatness and predicted that in later years he would win events like the Open.

Some journalists suggested that Moran's ability to recover his game was the mark of a golfing genius. The correspondent with *American Golfer* wrote:

> In spite of this overwhelming disaster weighing on his mind all day like a ton of lead, he did the best score of the day in the afternoon, 74, and finished in third place. If Moran can play like this again he will win the championship before long, as no Irishman has ever won it so far.

After the championship at Hoylake, *The Times*' correspondent suggested that Michael Moran's main weakness was his temperament. The unnamed reporter predicted that success would come if the Irishman showed some patience: 'If he could school himself to take things rather more quietly, he might easily win for he has grand golf in him.'

In the autumn of 1913 Moran appeared at a match play tournament at Weybridge, which carried a first prize of some £500, but he was not in good physical shape. He had an attack of muscular rheumatism, which limited the strength in his arms, and he returned to Dublin disappointed after a number of frustrating days in England.

He had a bit more luck when he travelled to Chantilly to take part in the French Open Championship, where he secured twelfth place and £5 in prize money. Michael Moran's experience on the tournament circuit in Britain and his long-running success in Ireland meant that his services as a golfer were much in demand, and a number of clubs wanted to employ him as a professional.

In 1914 he was offered a job with the recently formed Seaham

Harbour Club in the north-east of England near Sunderland. He combined his duties at Seaham with competitive golf matches across Britain, and in the summer of 1914 made another appearance at the Open.

He could not better his record-breaking top slot of third from 1913, and was beaten by his old sparring partner, Harry Vardon, who eventually secured his sixth Open Championship. Although Moran failed to take home any prize money, and he was finally ranked in twenty-fifth place, his performance was praised by watching reporters. *The Times'* journalist commented:

> The Irishman Michael Moran played very sound golf. He seems to have steadied himself down a little in his hitting since last year, and he is applying more within himself and his putting was quite excellent.

The arrival of the war in August 1914 effectively ended Moran's career just as he was beginning to show that he could compete with the world's finest players. In 1915, like so many other Irishmen, he volunteered to join the British armed services, becoming a Private with the South Irish Horse Regiment. Golf's loss was the military's gain, and those who had watched him develop as a player hoped that he would return to the sport on a full-time basis once he was no longer needed by the army.

In an article for the *American Golfer* magazine, Bernard Darwin wrote:

> Ireland still has a claim on him and will watch his career eagerly when the present European war is over. For the time being he is a cavalryman, having enlisted in the South Irish Horse. [...] He has enormous grit and a fine temperament which he hides under a subdued demeanour, and he will make a splendid soldier of this kind. Good luck to him.

The South Irish Horse had been formed in 1902 and was originally known as the South of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry. In uniform, as he learned about the basics of soldiering, Michael Moran's life changed dramatically, as it did for the thousands of other men who volunteered for armed service after hostilities were declared in August 1914.

The war dominated everything, and any thoughts of competitive golf were largely forgotten as many young players volunteered for the front.

Hundreds of golfers across Ireland signed up and came from southern clubs like Greystones, Foxrock and Portmarnock, and in the north members from places like Malone, Holywood, Portrush and Royal County Down also enlisted. Club membership was decimated because of the number of recruits, and some courses were out of action for the duration of the war because their land was needed for military use. The British Army appropriated the Royal Dublin course, which was used as a firing range.

Major golf tournaments across Ireland were suspended, including the Irish Amateur Close Championship, which had first been played in Portrush in 1893. Many of Michael Moran's contemporaries decided to enlist, and they included well-known names who had competed on courses the length and breadth of Ireland.

One of those was Averell Digges La Touche, who was a very talented amateur golfer who played in the Irish Close Championship. Educated at Bedford Grammar School, he was a member of the Royal County Down Golf Club and his family had strong Irish connections. His ancestors were originally Hugenot nobles who arrived in Ireland from France after the persecutions of the seventeenth century. His father was a major in the Bengal Infantry, and when the war broke out, twenty-nine-year-old Averell got a commission with the 5th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles. He saw action at the Western Front in June 1915, and three months later in September he was killed at Hooge in France.

His death was not the only tragedy his family had to bear.A month earlier Averell's brother, Everard Digges La Touche, had been

killed in Gallipoli. Everard, who was a clergyman, was a fascinating character who wore his heart on his sleeve. Born in Newcastle in County Down, he was educated at Trinity College in Dublin where he established a reputation as a very bright and able student. He moved to Australia, and when the war broke out he enlisted with the Australian Infantry. Everard believed that as a Christian it was his duty to volunteer for service, and he went ashore during the Gallipoli landings in August 1915 at Anzac Cove. As he took part in the attack against Turkish forces at a place called Lone Pine he was shot and killed. Both brothers are commemorated in Newcastle in County Down, at St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and on the family memorial at the Mount Jerome cemetery, also in the city.

For Michael Moran, life in uniform bore little resemblance to his previous existence as one of best golfers in the British Isles. Occasionally, however, he got the opportunity to pick up some clubs and play a game.

He was granted leave and returned to the fairways to take part in a series of charity tournaments in Ireland. He played in fundraisers for the Red Cross, and in 1917, much to the delight of local people, Moran turned up at Clontarf Golf Club. Even though he did not have a proper set of clubs, a mixed bag was quickly thrown together for the former Irish champion. Ireland's greatest pre-war golfer took to the course wearing a cap and his trademark army boots and clutching a bag of borrowed irons. He must have looked a picture. It seems that his attire did little to affect his performance, and in typical style he completed the nine holes in three under par.

In the final year of the war the South Irish Horse became an infantry battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment, and Michael Moran was one of those soldiers who made the transfer. By the spring of 1918 he was in France, where he and his comrades were on the receiving end of an intensive German assault close to Le Cateau. The area was a key point on the Western Front and housed a railhead and a military hospital, and for almost the entire length of the war it was in German hands. It had been the scene of fierce fighting in the early weeks of the war when British and French troops were

overpowered and outnumbered by German forces. In April 1918 the British High Command launched a daring bid to recapture Le Cateau. Moran was badly injured and was taken to the German-run military hospital in Le Cateau. The medical staff were unable to save him, however, and on 10 April 1918 he died.Coincidentally, that was the day the town finally fell into British hands after a determined advance by men from the Connaught Rangers.

News of Michael Moran's death took some time to filter through, and it only became public knowledge back in Ireland eight months later in December 1918. It seems likely that his death could only be confirmed once all the British dead were identified in Le Cateau following the armistice.

Moran's fame was such that, understandably, the news of his death appeared across newspapers in Britain and Ireland. Inevitably, the tributes centred on the fact that he was an Irish champion for five successive years, and the obituaries highlighted his performance in the 1913 Open when he became the first Irishman to win prize money.

Some of Moran's contemporaries spoke about the contribution he had made to the game. His old rival, Harry Vardon, who would go on to win the Open a staggering six times, believed that the young Dubliner was special: 'If Moran had been spared, he might have been Ireland's first world champion.'

Moran's family were informed about his death and the subsequent burial in France, but matters were complicated by the fact that his will could not be traced.

It was known, though, that he had written it before he saw action in Le Cateau. The bureaucratic stalemate was finally solved by his uncle, also called Michael Moran, who recalled seeing the will back in 1917 written in his nephew's army pay book. After matters were finally resolved, the grand total of £21. 4*s*. 11*d*. was handed over to his sister.

Had Michael Moran survived the war it is likely that he would have returned to the sport he loved. He was only thirty-two, and had many more years to give to the game. After the war, in his honour, a

competition was created in his name, which became one of the major events on the Irish golf circuit. He was the finest player of his generation, and had history and circumstance been different he would have been a champion who would have blazed a trail for the likes of Rory McIlroy and Padraig Harrington.

Michael 'Dyke' Moran belonged to a different generation, and although he lies buried far from home his presence can still be felt at the Royal Dublin course. Close to where he watched his first game and where he learned to hold a putter, visitors are reminded of his legacy. The fourteenth hole is 561 yards long and a tricky par 5. It takes some skill to find your way to the green, and you need to be able to drive the ball like a catapult – which is appropriate, since the hole carries the name of the club's most famous son.

8 Red, Blue and Khaki

'For you who play football while others seek fame,
The knickers of sport are the garments of shame.'
– Poem to encourage sportsmen to enlist, 1914

The outbreak of the Great War posed real difficulties for football clubs across all the home countries, and in August 1914 serious questions were asked about whether it was appropriate for the sport to continue to be played.

A debate began in local and national newspapers, and the question was a simple one. Should professional sport continue at a time of national crisis? The rugby authorities were quick to make a decision and encouraged players to enlist with battalions in their local area. The levels of recruitment were such that leading English clubs quickly cancelled fixtures because they simply did not have enough players to put together a team. In Ireland, the Irish Rugby Football Union, the game's governing body, took a similar approach

to their counterparts in England, encouraging players to enlist. IRFU President Frank Browning, whose story is told elsewhere in this book, sent a circular to players in August 1914 just days after the war was declared, and he quickly established a corps of men who carried out drilling at Lansdowne Road.

Their number was not purely made up of rugby players; the ranks were swelled by athletes and a large number of rowers – men like Trinity College old boy Edward Millar, who represented his university and who would later lose his life in August 1915. Ernest Julian was another talented oarsman and rowing coach who enlisted after attending a meeting at Lansdowne Road. He was a Professor of Law at Trinity College Dublin, and would die at Suvla Bay in August 1915 in the colours of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Julian was one of fifty Trinity rowers who fell in the Great War.

In the cricketing world there was also an intense debate about how the game should respond to the outbreak of war, and whether fixtures should be fulfilled or cancelled. Initially, the MCC decided to carry on with their programme of games, but in late August 1914 opinion changed when the legendary cricketer-tuned-columnist W.G. Grace wrote a letter to *The Sportsman* newspaper. Grace, a revered and influential figure, argued that 'the time has arrived when the county cricket season should be closed'. He went on to say that all first-class cricketers should 'come to the help of their country without delay in its hour of need'. W.G. Grace's intervention crystallised the debate, and days later Field Marshal Lord Roberts spoke at a gathering of army recruits and praised their decision to enlist, telling them:

> How very different is your action to that of the men who still go on with their cricket and football, as if the very existence of the country were not at stake.

The thoughts of W.G. Grace and Lord Roberts convinced many in the cricketing world that the remaining matches of the season should be cancelled, and the MCC concluded that the remaining fixtures

should not take place.

The football authorities continued to insist that matches would be played, and in late August 1914 representatives of the Football League met and said that games would continue, although they encouraged clubs to assist the war effort through the raising of funds, and also allowed military drilling to take place on their premises. The move was seen by some politicians as inadequate and unpatriotic, and a fierce and at times deeply personal debate about whether professional football matches should be cancelled for the duration of the war continued. There were accusations that football officials and those who ran the clubs were being unpatriotic during a time of national crisis.

Football Assocation Chairman J.C. Clegg insisted that he, and all those involved in the running of the game, were doing all they could: 'Football players and supporters are as patriotic as the next man. Why should football be singled out for such a slur?'

The Football Association agreed that the War Office could have access to football grounds on non-match days, and allowed public figures to address players and spectators in an attempt to boost recruitment. Despite such moves, the debate about the future existence of professional football during the war did not go away, and the public discussion got heated and at times hostile.

An editorial in the London *Evening News* took a pretty direct line:

> This is no time for football. The nation must occupy itself with more serious business. The young men who play football and those who look on have better work to do. They are summoned to leave their sport, and play their part in a greater game. That game is War, for life and death.

In October 1914, when the Football Association announced their plans for the FA Cup, the footballing authorities were criticised and became the target of a celebrated *Punch* cartoon. In the cartoon, which was widely read and very popular, Mr Punch is clearly seen

admonishing an embarrassed professional footballer who is standing pitchside clutching a football. The cartoon had the headline 'The Greater Game', and Mr Punch is saying to the player: 'No doubt you can make money in this field, my friend, but there's only one field today where you can get honour.'

The cartoon struck a chord with the public, and the debate about the role footballers should play in the war effort intensified. In November 1914, Harold Tennant, the Under Secretary of State for War, declared that professional footballers needed to 'make sacrifices', and even the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, entered the debate, saying that 'professional football should be discontinued'. The novelist E. Phillips Oppenheim ridiculed footballers in verse with a poem that was published in the *Daily Express*:

For you who play football while others seek fame,
The knickers of sport are the garments of shame

To many in the football world, the issue of professional players simply stepping away from the game and enlisting into the armed services was not a straightforward decision. Many of the players were married with wives and children to support, and the pay from the clubs was their only form of income. The clubs also had financial concerns since they were contracted to pay players and there was some confusion over what would happen if games were cancelled. There were also worries about the future viability of many clubs if matches were abandoned.

However, such financial concerns cut little ice with those in the press who felt that the men running English football were making excuses, and there were accusations that football officials were being unpatriotic during a time of national crisis.

Some argued that as thousands of young men fought in France and Flanders it was insensitive of others to play professional sport at home. There was also calls that football supporters should actually boycott games. In a letter to *The Times* in November 1914 the historian A.F. Pollard wrote: 'Every spectator who pays his gate

money is contributing so much towards a German victory.'

As the Football Association and the Football League came under intense pressure to cancel matches, others took matters into their own hands. The issue was also raised in the House of Commons, and the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, was questioned by Sir John Lonsdale, a Unionist MP who represented the constituency of Mid Armagh. Lonsdale wanted to know if the government would force the football authorities to cancel games so that players could sign up for armed service for the duration of the war. Asquith said that there was no need, and that discussions with the FA and the War Office about the recruitment of players were continuing. Quizzed about the low number of recruits that had been achieved from spectators at football grounds, Asquith said that he had seen recent reports but commented that in Scotland 'there was a very different response'.

Footballers in Edinburgh were trailblazers in the early days of recruitment, and in November 1914 the former Liberal MP Sir George McCrae announced that he had volunteered for the army and was planning to raise a battalion made up of local footballers. At the time Hearts were league leaders, and their decision, and that of the other Scottish clubs, to continue to play football attracted much criticism. One letter to the *Evening News* in Edinburgh suggested that the club should be known as 'The White Feathers of Midlothian'. That criticism hurt, and on the afternoon of 25 November eleven Hearts players enlisted for the battalion led by Sir George McCrae. In England others followed suit, and in December 1914 the MP Joynson Hicks contacted a number of English clubs and invited them to help establish a unit of footballers in the ranks.

The MP was determined that players from across a variety of clubs would enlist: 'We must all do our part, and I shall not be satisfied until we have two or three Footballers' Battalions fighting in Flanders.'

Thirty-five professional footballers signed up at a meeting in Fulham Town Hall, and over the next few months around 300 would enlist and form the 17th Middlesex (Footballers' Battalion). The ranks were opened to professional and amateur footballers and their

friends, and such was the demand that a second battalion, the 23rd Middlesex, was also established.

In Ireland, football games continued to be played in the autumn and winter of 1914, even though many leading players quit the game and volunteered to join the armed services. As the war progressed past Christmas 1914 and into the new year, every month brought sad news as the newspapers carried stories of former players dying in the trenches.

By the spring of 1915 it became clear to football officials in London and to those who ran the game in Ireland that they could not sustain a league programme whilst the war continued. The last big game in England was the FA Cup Final in April 1915, when Sheffield United played Chelsea at Old Trafford, which came as thousands of young men were fighting in France. The crowd included so many spectators in uniform that it became known as 'The Khaki Cup Final'. Watching from the sidelines were a number of wounded soldiers, including one man who had lost an arm in battle. At half-time, veterans of the Boer War walked around the pitch and spectators threw pennies into collection pots for the Red Cross. The atmosphere was low-key, which was hardly surprising since Britain had now been at war for eight months and many in the crowd were genuinely worried about what their future might hold.

Even when the game finished and Sheffield United lifted the cup after a 3–0 win, the issue of the war and the ongoing debate about football's role in recruitment resurfaced. Lord Derby, who was one of the major guests of the day, addressed the players: 'You have played with one another and against one another for the cup; play with one another for England now.'

It was clear that the time for playing football was over, and those who ran the game knew that they had to act. In July, representatives from the English, Scottish and Irish leagues met in Blackpool to consider the future of the game during wartime. Although some matches would still be played, officials agreed to suspend international matches and cup competitions, and professional football would effectively cease. The leagues also agreed that local

games could go on, but must not interfere with those engaged in 'war-work'.

Days later, the management committee of the Irish Football League met in Belfast and decided that league competitions would not go ahead, but other games including Irish Cup matches would still take place.

In response to the war and the limits on travel in Ireland, league matches were organiséd on a geographical basis with the Belfast teams largely playing amongst themselves and the Dublin teams following suit. The game in Ireland had developed quickly since the 1880s, and in the big cities watching football had become one of the most popular pastimes.

Officials at Ireland's oldest club, Cliftonville, who played at Solitude in North Belfast, had been instrumental in bringing the sport to the city. The club came into existence in 1879 after an advertisement was placed in Belfast newspapers by businessman John McAlery. He had recently been in Scotland and had watched the game of football being played, and liked it so much that he wanted to set up his own team. For the side's first match he invited the exotically named Quidnuncs to play, and on Saturday 27 September 1879 at four o' clock, history was made when Cliftonville's first match got underway.

John McAlery was a sportsman who liked both rugby and cricket, and he was convinced that football as an organised game would take hold in Ireland. A talented cricketer, he was also keen to try this new sport, so he took to the field that September afternoon and played in the Cliftonville defence as captain of the team. The conditions were not ideal as the ground was 'almost under water' due to a torrential downpour. It clearly took players some time to get used to the rules of football, as the *News Letter* reported that 'the match could not be considered a good exhibition of the association code'. The reporter added that handball occurred 'too frequently', which was probably no great surprise since the Quidnuncs team comprised rugby players who were more used to picking up the ball. The historic game finished 2–1 to the Quidnuncs.

Cliftonville were now the pioneers of Irish football, and after their opening game John McAlery spent a lot of time visiting groups of young men and trying to persuade them to establish football clubs. McAlery knew that without an association or a league of some kind the sport would have no chance of surviving. As McAlery continued to lobby local sports groups to set up a football club, he invited Scottish teams over to Belfast to play friendly matches against Cliftonville.

Caledonian FC from Glasgow arrived in Ireland in October 1879, and not surprisingly gave the home team a lesson in how the game should be played. They thumped Cliftonville 9–1, although the watching press were kind to McAlery's novices and said that their play was 'very fair considering that very little practice has been had'.

John McAlery's persistence and lobbying paid off, and soon a series of teams were established. In 1880 the Irish Football Association was formed at a Belfast hotel. McAlery played a key role in the development of the game in Ireland, and he would also represent Ireland at international level and later become an influential football administrator. He played in Ireland's first international against England at Knock in Belfast in February 1882. England destroyed the home side convincingly, and by full-time were 13–0 winners. Afterwards, McAlery sat in the dressing room and cried. He had helped to bring football to Ireland, but he knew that much work needed to be done to bring the local game up to the standard of play in England.

The early days of football in Ireland were dominated by clubs in the north, and Cliftonville were soon joined by a number of teams, including Linfield, who were known as 'The Blues' on account of their team shirts. In Victorian Ireland Linfield would emerge as one of Cliftonville's greatest opponents – a Belfast rivalry that lasts to this day. In 2015, matches between the 'Blues' and the 'Reds' are much anticipated and are part of the Northern Irish football calendar, just as they were a century ago.

In 1886, Linfield were formed by a group of textile workers in South Belfast, and the team were originally known as Linfield

Athletic Club. They initially began playing on ground behind their mill, which was known locally as The Meadow. They then moved to a series of other grounds, and eventually on-the-pitch success, which brought in much-needed money, helped club officials to secure some land at Windsor Park, where the club plays today.

The team quickly developed a tradition of playing attractive football, and in 1891 they secured the double, winning the Irish Cup and the League Championship. Linfield's big rivals were Cliftonville, and their encounters were often high-scoring affairs attracting large crowds. In September 1890 the *News Letter* reported on one clash of the Blues and the Reds by noting that 'the match excited not a little interest and was witnessed by a large assemblage of spectators including a fair proportion of ladies'.

A stalwart of the Linfield side was twenty-one-year-old Dick Moore, a talented left half who had honed his football skills some years earlier with his classmates from the Model School in Belfast and at the Intermediate School in Lisburn. Brought up as an Anglican, he was the son of a rope merchant and came from the Shankill area of Belfast, where many of Linfield's supporters came from. A full-time soldier, he combined a footballing career with life in the military and served for twenty-one years with the Royal Irish Rifles and saw action with them and the Royal Irish Fusiliers in the Great War.

Handsome, with blue eyes and brown hair, he was of average height, five feet seven inches tall, and weighing around twelve stone. At first glance, Dick Moore looked like many of his contemporaries. However, it was his presence on the football field and skill with the ball that set him apart from other players. Playing at halfback, he became a regular in the team that was described by one journalist as having 'one of the strongest combinations in Ireland'. Linfield's success and their reputation for free, flowing football and high-scoring games attracted large crowds in Belfast.

By the 1890s, the pastime of watching football at the weekend and on some weekdays was growing in popularity, though the increase in attendance brought its own particular problems for the clubs.

Occasionally at matches the crowds spilled onto the pitch and fighting broke out amongst spectators, and often the players found themselves the target of physical and verbal abuse.

In March 1890 at the final of the County Antrim Shield in Belfast during a local derby, Linfield were leading Distillery by five goals to three, and as the game was coming to a close, play on the field became quite rough. A Distillery player who had previously been cautioned for tripping was sent off by the referee. As he left the field a number of Distillery supporters surrounded him, and then other spectators came onto the field. The referee, a Mr Elleman, was mobbed by the crowd and struck, and according to one observer 'the wildest excitement prevailed'.

Police officers came onto the pitch and the fighting stopped, though it was not the end of the trouble. The Distillery players left the field, and the crowd then attacked one of the goals and pulled down the crossbar at the pavilion end of the ground.

Officials from the County Antrim Football Association quickly held an emergency meeting and called the game off. One of those who witnessed the scenes was a Mr A. Sinclair. His job on that March day was to present the shield to the winning captain, and just before the crowd invaded the pitch he placed it on a table in front of the pavilion ready for the presentation. The pitch invasion changed his plans, and as one reporter noted that 'after the abrupt and disgraceful termination of the match, the shield was of course removed'.

Senior members from the County Antrim Association met some days later to discuss the trouble at the final, and took some swift and dramatic decisions. They decided not to award the shield, and also withheld the medals and suspended one of the Distillery players.

For Linfield's players it was disappointing and frustrating not to be honoured for their achievement, but it did not diminish the team's desire to play, and they became the club that everybody across Ireland wanted to beat. It was a triumphant time for the side, and also marked the most successful period of Dick Moore's footballing career. He was one of the most talented players in the league, and his skills were recognised by journalists and football officials alike.

In May 1890, as the season came to a close, he was selected to play for an Ulster select team against a Lancashire County team that included stars from Bolton Wanderers, Everton and Bury. It was the first time the English visitors had been in Belfast for three years, and the game captured the attention of the Irish press, who were excited about the prospect of local players taking on household names from England. One journalist said that the encounter had the potential to be the 'best match of the year' and reminisced that in the last game between the teams 'we were treated to an exhibition of Association football the like of which we never saw in Ireland'.

On the first Saturday in May in 1890, 3,000 spectators turned up at Linfield's grounds to watch the game, and they would not be disappointed. It was a wonderful match, and at half-time, much to the home crowd's delight, the Ulster select lead was 3–1. In the second half the boys from Lancashire came back strongly and scored twice, but the local boys managed another goal to win 4–3. The game lived up to all the expectations, and Dick Moore's part in the victory did not go unnoticed.

In the new season he continued to play a crucial role in Linfield's success, and in January 1891 he was selected to take part in an international trial match at Linfield's ground. Moore was on familiar territory and surrounded by many friends since the two trial teams were made up of many players from Linfield, Distillery and Cliftonville. He played well enough to impress the watching selectors, and received his first Irish cap when Ireland entertained Wales in Belfast on Saturday 7 February 1891.

The match captured the imagination of the public, and on the day of the game the *News Letter* reported that 'we never remember so much interest being taken in an international match in Belfast'. The Welsh team arrived in the city the day before and had time for a little bit of sightseeing before they retired to the Queen's Hotel. They visited the Gallahers' tobacco factory and went to the offices of the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, and then paid a visit to a travelling circus. Well rested, the players turned up at Linfield's Ulsterville ground to an excited crowd of 12,000 spectators desperate to witness an Irish

victory.

In pleasant, dry weather, and with the pitch in perfect condition, it was Wales who got off to the better start. The visitors scored first, but Ireland came back quickly and equalised, and then the crowd were treated to a flood of goals with Ireland going in at half-time 4–2 ahead.

In the second half Ireland scored three more times, with Wales managing to beat the Irish keeper only once, so when the Scottish referee blew the full-time whistle, Dick Moore and his teammates had secured a famous 7–3 victory. Moore's debut was a success, and he retained his place in the Irish team for the match against England at Wolverhampton the next month.

The game in the English midlands could not have been more different from the match in Belfast against Wales. Ireland were outclassed by an English team that included players from West Bromwich Albion, Stoke, Notts County and Nottingham Forest. The difference in technique, skill and ball control was obvious, and England ran out 6–1 winners.

Even though England had destroyed Ireland's defence and outplayed their midfield, Dick Moore was given another chance to prove that he was of international standard, and was chosen for the Scotland game.

Played at Parkhead, Celtic's home ground, the hosts were the favourites to win, and history was on the side of the Scots. Scotland had won the last six encounters, and on paper looked like the much stronger team. Ireland held their own, but Scotland proved stronger and kept their record intact by securing a 2–1 win.

The result in Glasgow was a rare setback for Moore, who was used to being on the winning side. The 1890/91 season was his most successful, and by the end of it Linfield were the best team in Ireland, winning both the cup and the League Championship. Dick Moore would play a crucial role in the team's achievement, but he never witnessed that kind of success again.

His international career ended after his trip to Scotland, and a number of years later he left Linfield and concentrated on his full-

time career as a soldier. He now had different priorities and immersed himself in army life, becoming a colour sergeant in the Royal Irish Rifles. Little detail is known of his time in the military before the Great War except that he served for twenty-one years, and then he left the service and began working as a labourer. When war broke out in 1914 he wanted to go back into uniform, so he turned up at a recruiting office in Lisburn and offered his services.

Dick Moore was forty-six years old when he signed up, and after a medical on 12 September 1914 he was accepted back into the Royal Irish Rifles. He became a regimental quartermaster sergeant with the 11th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles and saw service with them until 1917, when he was recommended by Colonel Sharman Crawford to be admitted into an Officer Cadet Unit. In July 1917 he joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers in Cambridge, and was made a 2nd lieutenant.

By the autumn of 1918, as the war was coming to end, he was in Salonika, and in October of that year he fell ill. On 17 October he had a serious bout of diarrhoea and exhibited dysenteric symptoms, and began to pass blood and mucus. Four days later he was admitted to the 42nd General Hospital with dysentery, and although he initially improved his condition then deteriorated and he was placed on the 'dangerously ill' list. On 29 October, he became drowsy, slipped into semi-consciousness, and then died. The autopsy revealed that his intestine was congested throughout; there were patches of necrosis and splenic enlargement.

On 5 November 1918, just six days before the Great War ended, a telegram arrived in Belfast addressed to his widow, Ellen Moore, and she was informed that her husband had 'died of dysentery'. The brief, handwritten message ended by saying that the 'Army Council expresses sympathy'.

Ellen Moore's solicitors then had to organise the return of Dick Moore's possessions, and in a series of letters sent back and forward to the War Office they had to chase up army payments and allowances that were outstanding. His personal effects were boxed up and shipped back to Belfast, and in 1919 the outstanding monies

were finally sent to Ellen Moore, who was now living in Holywood, County Down. She was also given precise details of her husband's final resting place in the military cemetery in Kirechkoi-Hortakoi, which is around fifteen kilometres north-east of Thessalonica in Greece.

Today, the cemetery is beautifully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Inside the stone-walled burial ground there are nearly 600 graves of British and Commonwealth soldiers, and around sixty Bulgarian dead.

Dick Moore's contribution to international football was brief, lasting only one season, but he was well regarded in all the games he played for Ireland. His involvement with Linfield and his achievements with the Belfast club are much easier to chronicle. He was a key part in the team's first double in 1891, and helped to establish the club as one of the giants of the Irish game.

In Belfast, current and former players from the big clubs all volunteered, and within months saw military action. One who saw armed service and also wore the colours of Ireland was Hymie McKee, who starred for Cliftonville during the 1893 Irish Cup Final against Linfield.

Christened Hiriam Walton Harvey McKee, he was known simply by many as 'Hymie', and was the youngest player in the team. Although he had a slight figure and stood just five feet seven inches tall, he was strong and athletic. He quickly found a role as a talented right half, and after club officials watched him in action he became a team regular. A Presbyterian, he was the son of John and Jane McKee, and was born in Belfast on 16 September 1877. He hailed from the Cavehill Road in the north of the city, so it was natural that he would gravitate towards Cliftonville, which was his nearest club, and one of the founding clubs of the league.

Aged just sixteen, McKee's first big test as a player came in the 1893 Irish Cup Final. Linfield were the team everyone wanted to beat since they had won the cup in the two previous seasons, and had also claimed the double back in 1891. The game between the two Belfast rivals captured the mood of the city's sporting public, and the

News Letter reported that 'the interest taken in the match is phenomenal'. The newspaper also stated that the clubs 'are fairly evenly matched and have in all previous encounters this season played a splendidly contested game'. The final was billed as a battle of two sporting giants, and it was reported that 'no two teams have a greater following of spectators'.

Expecting a large crowd, the Irish Football Association put up ticket prices and the *News Letter* rather unwisely predicted that 'even the increase in the admission money will not prevent a record attendance'. The *News Letter*'s predictions turned out to be inaccurate, and later the Belfast newspaper criticised the decision saying 'to charge a shilling as the smallest admission to any match in Ireland is unreasonable'. The increase in charges put people off attending, and it was clear on Cup Final day that there were 'unoccupied seats on the different stands'.

Despite the hike in prices, those spectators who made the trip to the grounds at Ulsterville, off the Lisburn Road in Belfast, were treated to a bagful of goals in a game that was particularly one-sided. In fine weather, Linfield kicked off with the breeze at their backs and they had most of the possession, and by half-time the Blues were in a comfortable 5–0 lead. In the second half, although they attacked the Cliftonville goal regularly, they were unable to add to their tally. Cliftonville rallied briefly after the interval, but could only manage to score once in a contest that was really over after the first twenty minutes. The Blues' superior skill and firepower in front of goal paid off, and they lifted the Irish Cup for the third time in a row.

After the 1893 Cup Final, McKee's Cliftonville career flourished and in the years that followed he matured into a confident and skilful footballer. He would also get a chance to show off his sporting talent on a bigger stage, and played three times for Ireland. He was selected for the Ireland team, and in March 1895 he travelled to Derby to play a Home International match against England. The Irish side was made up of players from Linfield, Cliftonville, Glentoran and Distillery. McKee was the youngest player on the pitch, aged just seventeen years.

In appalling weather conditions, 10,000 spectators came to watch the game at the Derbyshire County Cricket Ground, and as the teams ran out they were greeted with pouring rain and a fierce wind. The heavy showers persuaded some supporters to turn back before they reached the ground, but the attendance was still large enough to secure receipts of £295, which was the largest amount of money ever taken at an England v Ireland football fixture. Both teams played a 2-3-5 formation, under the watchful eye of James Robertson, the referee from Scotland, who started proceedings promptly at 3.30p.m.

Within minutes, the home crowd had much to cheer as England began a goal-scoring spree that continued for most of the first half. At the break, Ireland were losing 5–0. In the second half England once again outplayed their visitors, and the Irish keeper, Tommy Gordon, had to pick the ball out of his net a further four times. Hymie McKee's international debut would prove to be forgettable, and it ended with England running out 9–0 winners.

There was little comfort from the result or the performance, but McKee was not discarded by selectors and was invited back for the next international game against Wales. This time the young Belfast man felt at home since the game was played at Cliftonville's home ground, Solitude. The Belfast match was more competitive than the encounter in Derby, and in front of a crowd of 6,000, Ireland performed creditably in a game that ended in a 2–2 draw.

The Welsh team also acquitted themselves well, since many of their players, including the legendary Billy Meredith, who was making his international debut, were violently ill on the sea crossing. Hymie McKee's international career continued later that month when he travelled to Parkhead in Glasgow to play for Ireland against Scotland. The Scots were too strong for McKee and his teammates, and they ran out winners by three goals to one, which brought Ireland's rather dismal Home International Championship to an end.

Away from sport, Hymie McKee was a bright, studious individual, and he trained to be an accountant. Little is known of his life outside of his footballing activities, and when he stopped playing for Cliftonville he emigrated to Winnipeg, in Canada, where he worked

as an accountant.

In May 1916, as the war continued in Europe, McKee arrived at a recruitment depot and enlisted with the 183rd Battalion of the Canadian Infantry. The battalion was part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and had started recruiting the year before throughout the province of Manitoba. In October 1916 the battalion sailed to England as one unit, but was then broken up. The men were transferred to other battalions, and then saw action in France.

It appears that Hymie McKee's time in France was limited, and he returned to Canada and was hospitalised in the Brandon Asylum suffering from syphilis. Records show that he died on 29 November 1916, just six months after he enlisted. His mother, Jane, who was living on the Cavehill Road in Belfast, was informed of his death by the Canadian authorities. He was buried at the Brandon Cemetery in Manitoba, which is in the Richmond Park area close to Highway 10. His Commonwealth headstone carries the Canadian maple leaf, his military service number and an inscription: 'ever remembered by his loving mother.'

Like so many of the Great War dead, Hymie McKee and Dick Moore were buried far away from home. Back in Belfast in the 1890s they were early pioneers of club and international football, and were stars of their day, sportsmen who wore red and blue, and ultimately khaki.

9 The Paris Thre

'A VERY GALLANT OFFICER AND A GOOD FRIEND.'
– Tribute to Alfred Taylor, Irish Rugby international

For three Belfast men, the first day of 1912 began in the company of nearly 20,000 noisy, sports-mad Parisians. When Alfred Taylor, William Edwards and William Beatty sprinted onto the Park des Princes turf, it was in front of one of the biggest crowds the French capital had ever seen. Regular games of international rugby were still a novelty in this part of Europe, and the arrival of the Irish team had excited the city's population so much that thousands of tickets had been snapped up days in advance.

Even though France were relative newcomers to the recently formed Five Nations Championship, the expectation of a home victory was still high. The side had improved in recent years, and in the previous season they had beaten Scotland. Press reports suggested that after two seasons playing in the new tournament the

French side were starting to look good, and the Irish match was anticipated to be a close affair.

For both teams, the New Year's Day encounter marked their opening game to the ten-match championship, and each side had a fresh look to its line-up. Ireland took to the field with five debutants, whilst the French selectors had chosen six new faces.

William Victor Edwards, from Strandtown in Belfast, who played in the pack for Ulster, was one of those making his first appearance in Irish colours. He was very strong and well built, with powerful shoulders, and after impressing selectors during club games in Belfast he was chosen to be Ireland's new Number 8. On the long journey from home, as he whiled away the hours chatting with his teammates, he may well have sought some advice from his fellow Ulsterman William Beatty.

Twenty-three-year-old Beatty, who made his international debut at the same Paris ground two years earlier, played as a prop, and had been on the winning side back in March 1910 when Ireland won by 8 points to 3. His French experience and knowledge of the opponents may also have been useful to another teammate, Alfred Squire Taylor, who, like Beatty, came from South Belfast. Taylor, who had progressed through the ranks of school and university rugby and then played for Ulster, was a speedy and talented centre. The twenty-two-year-old was playing his fourth game in an Irish shirt, but he had never played against the French.

Life for both sets of young players before the Great War must have seemed carefree and fun. The Irish and French teams included doctors, accountants and students, amateurs who played the game for fun and who were all young men at the peak of physical fitness. They were the sporting heroes of their day, household names with much to look forward to. As they ran out to play an international rugby match at the start of 1912, the idea of a bloody European war beginning in 1914 was unimaginable.

A glance at the team sheet from that January afternoon in Paris starkly illustrates how the Great War impacted on the lives of hundreds of sporting stars.

The new-look French side was a careful balance of youth and experience, and included Maurice Boyau, Jacques Conilh de Beyssac, Marcel Henry Burgun, Julian Dufau, Daniel Ihingoue, Gaston Lane and Jean Larribau. Like Taylor, Edwards and Beatty, they would all lose their lives during the Great War. Of the thirty players who took the field that day to rapturous cheers, ten would die as a result of the four-year conflict – seven French and three Irish.

One of the most celebrated players to die was the French flanker Maurice Boyau, who became one of his country's most successful fighter pilots during the war and was credited with bringing down thirty-five German aircraft and eighteen air balloons, and was awarded the Legion d'Honneur.

Gaston Lane, who played in the centre for France, was an established international, and appeared in his country's first ever game against the All Blacks back in 1906. When the war broke out he joined the infantry, and died at the age of thirty-one. His teammate Jean Larribau, who starred as scrum half in the Irish game, was another to join up, as did the French twenty-one-year-old fly half Marcel Henry Burgun and centre Daniel Ihingoue, who was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his bravery.

Like William Victor Edwards, Jacques de Beyssac made his international debut in Paris. The French forward had previously played rugby in England for Rosslyn Park, and during the war he was a tank commander.

In June 1918, just five months before the Armistice was signed, his tank was hit by a German shell and he was badly injured. He died in an ambulance as he was being taken to hospital in Compiegne.

The match in Paris proved to be a tight affair, and it was clear from the early exchanges that the French had improved their game. It was certainly very combative, and according to one observer: 'the doctor's services were in constant requisition', and at one stage it was reported that 'one of the Irishmen had a tooth knocked down his throat'.

For the best part of the first half, Ireland pressed the French defence and had their hosts pinned back close to their try line. The

Irish play was finally rewarded when Alfred Taylor got over the line to score his first international try. It was a wonderful moment for the Belfast man, who had been recalled to the team after an absence of nearly two years. Moments later, the joy continued for the visitors when Alexander Foster, a schoolteacher from Derry, scored another Irish try when he touched the ball down underneath the French posts.

Instead of giving Ireland the momentum to press ahead, the two Irish scores appeared to rejuvenate the home side and France quickly got on the scoreboard with two tries, much to the delight of the crowd. Just before half-time, Alfred Taylor showed why the Irish selectors were right to include him in the team. From a line-out, the ball came to the Ulsterman and he charged forward, making ground and exposing gaps in the French defence. He then passed to Dickie Lloyd, the creative fly half who was captaining Ireland, and he took the ball over the line for a third Irish try.

Ireland went in at half-time leading by 11 points to 6 after a pulsating and very entertaining forty minutes. Alfred Taylor stopped to talk to his teammates for a few moments in the knowledge that he was playing his best ever game for Ireland.

In contrast, the second half was a rather dull affair and the French team again had to defend in large numbers as Ireland pushed forward looking for a fourth try. There were occasional attacks from the home team, who nearly scored once, and would have done so had it not been for the brave tackling of the Irish full back Billy Hinton, who ended up falling on his head and being stunned for a few minutes. In the end, the second half remained scoreless and Ireland secured a famous victory, thanks in part to the try from Alfred Taylor and some hard tackling and dogged scrapping from William John Beatty and William Victor Edwards. It was an overseas Irish success that was hand delivered by the boys from Belfast.

Despite his try-scoring exploits and his fine all-round performance, Taylor's game in Paris would be his swansong, and he would never again wear his country's colours. Beatty would also miss the next match, but would be selected for the Wales game in Belfast

in March. William Victor Edwards was rewarded for his efforts in Paris, and he was put on the team sheet for the next Irish match against England at Twickenham.

The game on 12 February 1912, in front of around 25,000 spectators, was played in sunshine with the 'warmth and brilliance of an April day'. Ireland were no match for their hosts, and on a gloriously manicured pitch that had 'a fresh green appearance' and was 'firm to the tread', most of the play took place in the Irish half as England pressed forwards. For most of the first half the home side had the upper hand, and led at the interval 3 points to 0 with a single try.

In the second half matters got worse for Ireland as English pressure quickly turned into points, and the home side ran in four more tries and eventually won the game 15 points to nil. It proved to be a frustrating day for Edwards, and there was more disappointment to follow. The Twickenham defeat marked the end of his role in the Five Nations, and he would not be picked to play international rugby again. It is not known if this was due to injury or whether the selectors simply did not think he was good enough.

As a fit and talented athlete, he had many attributes that he used to his advantage on the playing field. Standing five feet eight inches tall and weighing in at fourteen and a half stone, he was a formidable figure. He had the perfect qualities for a rugby forward, and amongst his fellow players he exhibited strong leadership qualities. In Belfast he played rugby for Malone, and was an ideal choice for team captain. Sport had always been part of his life since his school days at Thanet College in Kent, and at two Northern Irish grammar schools, Coleraine Academical Institution and Campbell College in Belfast, where he stayed for a year. As well as rugby he was also a gifted swimmer, and regularly took part in championships and became the Irish 200-yard swimming champion, in addition to being an accomplished water polo player. He was fond of sea swimming, particularly across Belfast Lough, which separates counties Down and Antrim.

On 16 August 1913 he made history by becoming the first man

to swim across Belfast Lough. Shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon he slipped into the water at Whitehead in east Antrim, and four hours later he emerged from the sea at Clifton Jetty in Bangor surrounded by supporters and friends who watched from a flotilla of boats. His achievement got some coverage in the press, and one reporter noted that 'the distance, while most of six miles, is difficult to contend with, and a swimmer has to go much out of the distance owing to currents'.

Edwards was a trailblazer, and ten days after he had made history another swimmer braved the elements and swam shore to shore. Marguerite Cody, an English journalist who was working for the *Belfast Telegraph*, crossed the lough, this time swimming from Bangor to east Antrim. On 26 August she spent four hours and twenty minutes in the water during weather conditions that were described as ideal, although the water was cold and she was hindered by a 'strong flood tide'. She became the first woman to complete the crossing, and her achievement was reported across the UK.

William Edwards was born on 16 October 1887 to Mary and Alfred Edwards, and christened William Victor. He was brought up as a Presbyterian and lived at The Laurels in Strandtown in East Belfast. His father was a partner in Maguire and Edwards, who were furniture makers who worked out of premises in Upper Arthur Street in Belfast.

After his school years William made the short journey across the city to Queens University, and after he passed his final exams began life as an accountant. He started working for a local firm, Burns, Wilson and Company, and in his spare time was a regular player with Malone Rugby Club, captaining the team and helping them with his brother, Reginald Weston, to win a number of senior trophies. Like William, Reginald was a talented sportsman, and achieved his sole Irish cap in 1904 against Wales in Belfast.

Before the war broke out William Edwards lived at Gobbins Farm near Whitehead, which is situated by the sea, the very place where he began his famous Belfast Lough swim in August 1913. Like many from Unionist stock, Edwards was opposed to Home Rule. Along

with thousands of others he signed the Ulster Covenant in September 1912 and became a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force.

In September 1914 he volunteered for army service and was given a reference by a family friend, the Reverend John MacDermott, a Presbyterian Minister from Belmont in east Belfast. Edwards asked that he be allowed to join 'any North of Ireland Unit', and after a medical examinational he was declared fit for service. In late September he joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers and began to train for life on the battlefield.

He became an active member of a masonic lodge, and over the next few months saw training in Armagh, Tipperary and in England. Eventually he saw much action, and in 1916 he nearly lost his life during fighting close to the town of Ginchy. He was wounded on the right side of his head, an injury that would leave him with a permanent scar and cause regular bouts of insomnia and dizziness. He was put on the St Andrews hospital ship in the French port of Rouen, and arrived in Southampton and then began a period of convalescence back in the UK.

As he travelled back his family were informed of his injury and a telegram arrived at the Edwards home in east Belfast telling his parents that he had been admitted to hospital with a head wound, and saying that 'further reports will be sent when received'.

Edwards had a lucky escape – had the bullet been closer to his brain he would have died instantaneously. He was treated well, and on 10 January 1917 the Medical Board at Dublin's King George V Hospital met and concluded that 'all wounds have now healed' and stated that he had 'recovered' and was fit again for service. Two days later, from the Portobello Barracks of the 4th Royal Irish Fusiliers in Dublin, he wrote to apply for a 'wound gratuity'.

Enormous change came to his life in 1917, when Edwards was in a new theatre of war. In mid December the conflict took him first to Salonika, and then later in the month he arrived in Palestine, where he would spend Christmas. Despite the time of year, there was little festive cheer for the men on front-line duty. The prospect of fighting

the Turks, as well as facing constant rain and a delay in food supplies, meant that many men were miserable.

By this time Edwards had transferred to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who were part of the 10th Division, and he found himself in 'D' company, which was set up in 1914 at the request of IRFU President Frank Browning, himself a chapter in this book. Edwards joined a much depleted company since the Dublin 'Pals' had experienced heavy losses in Gallipoli. With his background in club and international rugby, 'D' company was a perfect fit for Edwards, and he took control of it on 28 December. On the next day, he lost his life. He was killed during the defence of the city of Jerusalem at a place called Deir Ibzia, and his body was initially buried 700 yards from the village, close to a track that led down to some trees.

The news finally reached London, and the dreaded telegram bearing the number E1289 was duly despatched to the Edwards home in Belfast, informing them of his death and stating that 'The Army Council expresses their sympathy.' The news arrived as the Edwards family ushered in the New Year, and his parents wrote back to the War Office requesting 'further particulars' of his death, including where their son was when he died.

Army officials responded to the request, and his last movements and details of his resting place were forwarded to the family. Much of 1918 was spent by his relatives and legal representatives trying to sort out William Victor's personal affairs, and many letters were exchanged between Belfast and London throughout the year.

In March 1918, an army committee met in Alexandria with the sole purpose of winding up his financial affairs, and then there was also the issue of returning his possessions to Belfast. Sorting out the financial affairs took a lot longer than the family had hoped, and the matter dragged on for much of the year. The Edwards family had requested outstanding money to be forwarded to Belfast, and had expected payment to be relatively quick. In October 1918 the family's Belfast-based solicitors wrote to the War Office about the delay over the promised money, and stated that 'Alfred Edwards, the father of the deceased is in a very low state of health and is anxious to get the

matter completed.'

A month later, when the issue had still not been resolved, another letter was sent by the solicitor to London stating that 'This matter has now become very urgent.' Days later, William Victor's mother, Mary Edwards, took pen to paper in an attempt to speed up matters. She wrote that

> It is now 11 months since his death [William Victor's] the shock of which has incapacitated his father from doing any business whatsoever.

Paperwork contained in the official army file of William Victor Edwards, which is lodged in the National Archives in London, shows that payment was sent to the family home in Belfast.

The sportsman and soldier was thirty years old when he died, and he was unmarried. After the war his name was engraved on the Strandtown War Memorial in east Belfast close to the original family home, and he is also commemorated on a small memorial on a cliff path in Islandmagee in County Antrim, which is where he lived before the Great War broke out.

He is remembered as an old boy of Campbell College, one of Northern Ireland's best known grammar schools situated close to Parliament Buildings at Stormont. The East Belfast school, named after the linen merchant Henry James Campbell, sits in a wonderful 100-acre wooded estate, and has a fine sporting tradition of producing international players.

Alfred Squire Taylor, who played on that January day in Paris with William Victor Edwards, was another Campbell old boy, and today his name is proudly included on an impressive memorial in the school's central hall. Two years younger than Edwards, Taylor went to Campbell College for five years, and like his Irish teammate he showed sporting talent at a young age and played rugby for the school team, and was also captain of the cricket eleven.

School records also indicate that he was a fine athlete, who excelled in the long and high jump, and reports from 1907 also show

that he was one of the school's finest hurdlers. It was at rugby and cricket that Taylor would make the biggest impact. On the rugby field his try-scoring and kicking ability helped to turn the first fifteen into one of the most formidable school teams.

In December 1906 he was part of the team that defeated Royal School Dungannon by 55 points to nil. Taylor produced 3 scores that day as Campbell ran in a staggering 10 tries.

His time in cricket whites was equally successful, and during the 1907 season his contribution to the team was recorded as 'absolutely brilliant'.

From Belfast, the eighteen-year-old moved to Scotland to study medicine at Edinburgh University, where he combined his studies with rugby, and not surprisingly was chosen to captain the university side. He was the son of Reverend David Taylor, who lived at Mingala in Windsor Park in Belfast, and even though he was based in Scotland he would often return home to see family and friends and play representative matches for Ulster and Queen's University. His games for the province and the university team made an impact on the rugby hierarchy, and his performances as a fast centre with an accurate kick started to get attention.

In February 1910, still a student and aged just twenty, he got his first experience of international rugby. It was an exciting time to play and watch rugby, as the traditional four Home Nations tournament had been revamped, and the inclusion of France had turned the competition into the Five Nations Championship. The arrival of the French team gave the matches extra spice and whetted the appetite of the press and the public, who were anxious to see what the men from across the English Channel could offer. Taylor would not play in the French game, but he was called into Ireland's team for the opening match against England, where he joined five other debutants.

Barely out of his teens, it must have seemed like a dream for the young lad from South Belfast to be fulfilling many a schoolboy's ambition – wearing the colours of his country. Better still, he made his debut against the 'old enemy' at the home of English rugby in

what was one of the best grounds in the British Isles.

The game at Twickenham was an odd affair, and will perhaps be best remembered for the scoreline. Despite the efforts of both teams over eighty minutes, the game ended as a scoreless draw.

On a bright, sunny afternoon, the 25,000 crowd gave a warm welcome to the Prince of Wales, who took his seat in the centre of the stand in his customary lounge suit and bowler hat. England were understandably favourites since Ireland had lost all three home internationals the previous season, so the expectation in some quarters was that England would win handsomely.

Alfred Taylor and his new teammates did not have the best preparation for the match in London as they all arrived late at the stadium. They travelled to Twickenham on a bus that 'experienced a mishap en-route' and meant that the kick-off was delayed by about fifteen minutes.

When the match finally got started it ebbed and flowed from end to end, and it was only the strong tackling of both sides that prevented any scores. The two sides appeared to be well matched, and for large parts of the game they cancelled each other out. England had a talented back line that included the famous Edgar Mobbs, the mercurial Northampton winger, and the crowd were anticipating that he would score.

Twenty-eight-year-old Mobbs was a household name who courted controversy because of his outspoken views. He often complained about the way players were treated by officials, and he was regularly involved in disputes with the hierarchy from the Rugby Football Union. When the war broke out in 1914 he enlisted and helped to recruit many hundreds of men, including dozens of sportsmen, into a battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment that became known as the 'Mobbs Battalion'. He died in 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres.

Tough tackling from the Irish back line stopped Mobbs scoring that day in 1910, although he did have to leave the field for treatment after receiving one particularly hard knock. When the Welsh referee blew the final whistle and brought the scoreless draw to an end, it

was the Irish faces that carried the bigger smiles.

Playing in the Irish back line, Alfred Taylor did well enough at Twickenham to warrant a recall, and he was selected for the Scotland game in Belfast two weeks later. The match at the Balmoral Showgrounds gave him an opportunity to represent his country in his home city. Scotland had started the new-look championship with mixed results, beating the French in Edinburgh but losing to the Welsh in Cardiff.

They arrived in Belfast the day before the game and stayed overnight at the Grand Central Hotel. The weather had been poor in the city for most of the week, and after a lot of rain the pitch at Balmoral was sodden, which prompted some journalists to speculate that the encounter would suit the forwards rather than the backs. Those predictions proved correct, and although the match was played in glorious conditions in sunshine with a slight wind it was dominated by the play of the Scottish and Irish packs. In the opening period the Scottish forwards made most of the possession, and their backs had little to do except act as interested observers. For the Irish forwards it was a frustrating day, and although they often got the ball, the point-scoring opportunities were limited.

As the game wore on, Scotland got the upper hand, and although they only led by 3 points at the interval, in the second half the visitors got more possession and the difference between the two teams became more obvious. Scotland scored three more tries, and eventually won the game by 14 points to nil. For Alfred Taylor, the contest did not turn out be the home debut he had hoped for, and like the majority of the 10,000 spectators he left the Balmoral Showgrounds disappointed.

Ireland's ambitious plans for the new Five Nations were not going well, but weeks later the players had a chance to turn things around when Wales arrived in Dublin in mid March for the game at Lansdowne Road.

Taylor kept his place in the starting line-up, and in the first half he and the other Irish players acquitted themselves well. Ireland established the lead with a try by another Belfast man, George

McIldowie, who played his club rugby with Malone. The Ulsterman who was playing as prop got his opportunity shortly before the break, but the Welsh fought back and scored a try to level the scores at half-time.

In the second half Ireland started brightly, and according to some observers looked like 'a winning team', but they could not sustain the pace and slowly the Welsh got more of the ball. The visitors ran in a series of tries and also a drop goal to win handsomely by 19 points to 3.

It would be Alfred Taylor's last game for Ireland that season as he missed the last match of the championship against France, which Ireland won by 8 points to 3.

The contest in Paris brought to an end Ireland's first Five Nations campaign, which saw England as champions, Wales as runners up, Scotland in third place and Ireland fourth. France lost all four of their matches and finished with the wooden spoon, conceding 95 points and scoring 20.

Alfred Taylor disappeared from the international rugby scene for nearly two years, and had to wait until January 1912 before he would wear the Irish jersey again and join his fellow Ulstermen Edwards and Beatty in Paris.

Life for the young student was busy, and his time was taken up by sport and studying. He continued to play rugby, and also became a member of Edinburgh University's Officer Training Corps, and in 1914 he finally graduated with a degree in medicine. History would dictate where and how he would practise his newfound skills.

When the war broke out in the late summer of that year, Taylor felt compelled to enlist. In October 1914 he did so in Hartlepool, where he was physically examined. A Lieutenant Robertson declared that the potential recruit was 'fit for military service'. He had filled in the necessary paperwork four days earlier, and like thousands of others were doing at the time, he answered a series of personal questions about his life and abilities. He mentioned his experience with the Officer Training Corps at university, confirmed that he could ride a horse, and when asked for a reference he gave the name

of a family friend who was a Presbyterian minister from Belfast. After the paperwork was completed and he was given the medical 'all clear', twenty-five-year-old Alfred Taylor was able to join the ranks of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

For the next three years he was in uniform, and treated the wounded and the dying as he saw action in Flanders and France. On occasion, like many others on the front line, he was unwell and needed medical help. In May 1917 he contracted rheumatic fever and needed urgent care, so he was placed on a Red Cross hospital ship and brought back to England, where he was deemed 'not fit for general service' and was given leave from military duties.

In the summer of that year he faced his sternest test as an army medic when he was attached to the Highland Light Infantry as men from that regiment took part in the Third Battle of Ypres. The fighting was part of a plan masterminded in part by the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Douglas Haig. He saw the area surrounding Ypres as crucial, and wanted to strike north-east from the Ypres Salent and seize ground, including the area known as Passchendaele and another known as Gheluvelt. There were also plans for a seaborne landing near Nieuport, and Haig hoped that his troops could then move towards Bruges and Ostend and aim for the Dutch border. In the end, many of the hoped-for preparations for the Ypres offensive simply didn't come to fruition. Haig wanted many hundreds of tanks, but in the end only 150 were available in July. The British commander's objectives were also hampered by the constant rain, which turned the trenches and the battlefield into a waterlogged bog.

The Third Battle of Ypres began in the early hours of 31 July 1917, and it started with a customary opening barrage. Men like David Doe from the Royal Engineers watched the events unfold, and he recorded in his diary that:

> ... human eyes never saw a more terrible yet grand sight [...] the guns were flashing in thousands and one could see the big bursts of shrapnel. Flashes of

> every kind of explosive were seen and were of different colours.

Alfred Taylor would have heard, and may have witnessed, the bombardment, and within hours as a medic he found himself busy on the battlefield tending to wounded comrades. He was used to the sounds and smells of battle, and had managed to keep himself away from the line of fire on all previous occasions. In the opening few hours of the attack, his luck ran out. As he dressed the wounds of one soldier, a German shell landed nearby and both Taylor and his patient died.

The Ulsterman's death was naturally felt keenly by his friends in the regiment and by his senior officers. One described him as 'one of the best medical officers, a very gallant officer and a good friend'. Another commanding officer wrote about Taylor's personality, and said he had a great sense of duty, which he performed well, and that 'he was always cheery under all circumstances'.

Amongst the death toll that day in the ranks of the Highland Light Infantry was another international rugby player who Taylor may well have known personally. James Young Milne Henderson was a Scottish international who played for his country in 1911. He, like Taylor, was with the 10/11 Highland Light Infantry, and was killed on the last day of July when the Third Battle of Ypres began.

On 5 August 1917 a telegram was duly sent to the Taylor home in South Belfast, which informed his family that he had been 'killed in action'. His father, the Reverend David Taylor, wrote back to office staff in London and asked for his son's belongings to be sent on to Belfast.

Initially, Alfred Taylor's body was buried in a grave north-east of Ypres at Verlorenhoek, and he was later re-interred at the Ypres Town Cemetery. His name is also recorded on a memorial in Comber in County Down.

Of the three Irishmen who ran out onto the Paris turf in 1912, Alfred Taylor was the first to die in combat. The last to lose his life

as a result of the Great War was William John Beatty, who actually died in February 1919, some three months after hostilities ended in November 1918. Beatty, who was aged thirty, died from influenza and pleurisy at a casualty clearing station in Charleroi, where he was being cared for after being seriously wounded in the fighting.

Born on 23 October 1888, he was the eldest son of George and Ellen Beatty, who lived at University Street in Belfast. Muscular and physically strong, he played prop for one of Ireland's oldest clubs, North, which was based in Belfast, and he also represented Ulster. In March 1910 he was called into the Ireland side for the match against France, which marked the final game of the first ever Five Nations Championship. The French struggled in their first season, and the game in Paris on 28 March saw Beatty and his teammates triumph by 8 points to 3.

It was by all accounts a physical affair, and according to one observer 'play was rather rough'. The report also noted that 'one player from each side had to retire for a short time owing to injuries'.

Beatty would miss out on all the games in the 1911 championship, but he would be recalled to the side in 1912 and accompany Edwards and Taylor on the trip to Paris for the 11 points to 6 victory.

Two months later, in a tightly fought encounter at the Balmoral Showgrounds in Belfast, he would play his final game in the pack for Ireland against Wales. By now, twenty-three-year-old Beatty was dividing his time between England and Ireland and playing his club rugby for North in Belfast and Richmond in London.

He was in Belfast in late March for the Welsh match; a game that gathered the attention of the public when more tickets were sold than for any previous championship match. In the run-up to the encounter sports journalists again speculated on how the recent Belfast rain might affect the outcome of the game, and one suggested that the pitch would 'cut up' and predicted that the conditions would favour Ireland as their forwards were noted for 'their splendid work on sodden turf'.

In the early stages of the match it appeared that the conditions were having little effect as it was the visitors who took the upper

hand. Even though Ireland defended well, and Beatty and his fellow forwards played with much purpose, it was the Welsh who went in at half-time leading. Davies, who played his club rugby with Aberavon, scored a try, and the talented full back Jack Bancroft, who was pretty handy as a county cricketer, scored a penalty to put the visitors ahead by 5 points to nil.

In the second half, with the wind behind them, Ireland's fortunes improved dramatically and soon the home team were on the scoreboard. A drop goal and a penalty brought Ireland back into the game, and in the latter part of the half a try by J.S. Brown secured the win.

William Beatty ended his international career on that March day in Belfast, and the result meant that he played for Ireland on three occasions and won every time. He had witnessed two away victories in Paris and one home success against Wales.

He spent much time working in the south of England, lived at various addresses in London, and had a job at a garage in the Surrey town of Esher. When the war came he joined the Army Service Corps, which was clearly looking for men with practical experience with machines and engines. When he was asked at the recruiting station about his abilities, he said that he could not claim to be a 'highly efficient engineer'.

Despite his modesty, he was quickly recruited into the ranks and was part of the British Expeditionary Force that went to France in 1915. He served with the Army Service Corps and was attached to the Fourth Army's heavy artillery, which probably relished having the services of a strapping prop forward who could handle himself and the military hardware.

Beatty was not an ordinary soldier who wanted to play a passive role, and his leadership skills were soon recognised by his comrades and those in authority. Over time he was promoted through the ranks, and he worked his way up to the position of major.

In uniform he showed enormous courage, and was Mentioned in Despatches, once in May 1917 and again in July 1919, some five months after he had died. The injuries he suffered in 1918 were so

serious that he was transferred to Charleroi for treatment. The war was over, but William Beatty's pain was not.

In the early days of February 1919, as he was being treated, matters became more complicated when his immune system became ravaged by the effects of influenza and pleurisy.

In the later stages of the Great War a deadly influenza pandemic known as 'Spanish Flu' swept across Europe and killed thousands of people. It is likely that Beatty may have contracted this strain of influenza. Nurses tried to keep him alive, but on 10 February he died, and was later buried at Charleroi Community Cemetery. His wife, Vivienne, was contacted at her home in Thames Ditton in Surrey and told of his death. She asked for his personal possessions to be sent home. In June 1919 his work on the battlefield was honoured when he was posthumously awarded an OBE.

William John Beatty, Alfred Taylor and William Victor Edwards all died in different parts of the world, and today they are remembered in Belfast for their contribution to club and provincial rugby. As dedicated amateurs they played without any financial reward. They were rugby players simply because they loved the game. They participated when it was beginning to become a popular international sport, and they witnessed the Four Nations Championship become Five with the inclusion of France.

Their time on the rugby stage was brief, and their deaths went largely unnoticed during a bloody period of history when the passing of young lives was sadly commonplace. They only played together as Irish internationals on one occasion, but it is game worth recalling. It was the first day of 1912, when a handful of Ulstermen celebrated the New Year in Parisian style.

10 The Call-Up

'He was devoted to the duties of his calling.'
Tribute to Robert Cecil Morrison, curate and Irish hockey international, 1916.

As the bell tolled for the final time, a tall, handsome man walked in off the street, pushed open the door at All Saints and wandered inside. It was Harvest Festival, so the Anglican Church in Hoole was understandably busy and the presence of the visitor prompted smiles and words of acknowledgement. The sight of the unexpected guest delighted the Reverend Pavitt, who was about to begin the evening service. The vicar talked to the new arrival and persuaded him to address the congregation.

Robert Cecil Morrison moved confidently to the front of the church, and when he turned around he was greeted by rows of familiar faces. He was no stranger to speaking in front of the parishioners; after all, he had been their much-loved curate for

nearly two years. Officially his clerical duties had ended eight months earlier, when he joined the Cheshire Regiment and resigned his post as Assistant Curate. He had enjoyed his posting, and his easy manner and constant cheerfulness made him a popular figure, particularly amongst the elderly and the sick.

In February 1916 the parish came together to say farewell, and he was presented with a silver communion set and a cheque as a token of their esteem. On a dark Sunday evening in October, as those same parishioners listened to him speak, they had no idea that it would be the last time they would share his company. Two days after his impromptu visit he set sail with his new comrades for the battlefields of France.

On Monday 13 November 1916, the former clergyman who was a 2nd lieutenant in the Cheshire Regiment was killed in action. Robert Morrison's unconventional journey to the trenches is a story of faith, commitment and service that began in Ireland. Born in 1888 and brought up in Kingstown, he was a student at Trinity College in Dublin where he studied for a Bachelor of Arts. It was at university that he first got interested in the military, and he became a member of the Officer Training Corps. Morrison's other major pastime as a student was hockey, which he began playing when he was a schoolboy at Kingstown Grammar School. After he went to university he continued to play the game, and he quickly established himself as a talented forward of some note. Morrison was gifted with pace, and his clever stick-work and pinpoint crosses meant that he was an outside left worth having in any hockey team.

By 1910 he was beginning to get noticed, and in February of that year he was selected to play for Leinster against Connaught in an interprovincial trial match in Dublin.

On the same day that Morrison and his teammates took on Connaught, another group of players from Munster played Ulster, and the two matches provided an ideal opportunity for the Irish selectors to cast their eyes over any new stars worthy of international duty. It was of little surprise to those who watched Morrison play

regularly to discover that he was eventually selected to play for Ireland.

In his first season he was chosen for all the home internationals and played against England, Scotland and Wales. The game against England in London ended in a 4–1 defeat, whilst the game against Scotland in Dublin saw Ireland triumph 4–0. In the Scotland fixture he joined other talented players in the Irish team who would later serve in the Great War including Thomas Perrin and William Ball, a fellow Trinity student, whose stories are featured later in this chapter. In the match against Wales at Abergavenny, Morrison and his teammates were particularly impressive and Ireland emerged as winners 6–0.

In 1911 Robert Morrison did not feature in any of Ireland's international games, but a year later he returned to the side and played against England and Wales. From an Irish perspective the game against England, which was played at Beckenham, is perhaps best forgotten, as the home side trounced Ireland 10–3. The resounding nature of the English victory was unexpected. Even the English press were shocked by the result, and the report in the *Coventry Herald* was typical:

> England's decisive victory over Ireland, at Beckenham was somewhat of a surprise. Certainly everyone expected England to win, but not by ten goals to three.

As the scoreline indicated, England outplayed Ireland in every department and the Irish side were made to look very ordinary.

Robert Morrison's international career lasted another two years, and he made further appearances against the other home nations in 1913 and 1914. In total he represented Ireland on ten occasions, but in 1914 the outbreak of the Great War led to the championship being suspended.

The English Hockey Association wrote to officials in Dublin informing them that the 1915 match was being cancelled. Hockey

administrators in Ulster took a similar decision about the future of the domestic game, and in September 1914 after a special meeting resolved that for the time being all competitions would be postponed.

When the call went out for volunteers to join the British military, hundreds of hockey players enlisted across Ireland. Precise figures are not known for the total number who volunteered, but some clubs kept records of those players who saw Great War service. Amongst the Ulster clubs, for example, Lisnagarvey provided forty-three players, with thirty-six volunteers coming from the South Antrim club. Thirty-one men who played hockey for Cliftonville signed up for military service, and twenty-seven men from the Banbridge club saw Great War service. Many other volunteers came from clubs like Three Rock Rovers, Monkstown and Malone. As Robert Morrison heard about many of his teammates enlisting and going off to the Western Front, he took a similar life-changing decision.

In 1914 he was ordained as a deacon and moved away from Dublin permanently to take up a posting with All Saints Church in Hoole in Cheshire. His work as an Assistant Curate appears to have suited him, and he quickly settled into life in the parish. The Dubliner's ministry took him into the homes of the sick and elderly, and he was popular because of his pleasant demeanour and positive outlook. His life revolved around the church, where he took part in the routine work of weddings, baptisms and funerals, as well as assisting with morning and evening prayer.

As a Christian minister he was making his mark, and it seemed to be only a matter of time before he would be offered the chance to become a vicar with a parish of his own. As the war continued, however, and Robert Morrison watched as other friends volunteered for the trenches, he began to think about a future away from the church.

At the beginning of 1916, after much thought and soul-searching, he finally decided to resign and volunteer for military service. The local newspapers were full of stories of the war, and understandably Robert Morrison's decision was newsworthy, so inevitably a report

about his resignation made it into the pages of the *Liverpool Echo.* The Reverend Pavitt explained that his Assistant Curate had decided to enlist, and said that the parishioners of Hoole were heartbroken to see him leave.

In February 1916 there was full house at All Saints as many from the parish gathered to say goodbye and present Robert Morrison with gifts and wish him well.

The Reverend Pavitt said:

> ... whatever views we may hold on the debateable point of the clergy as combatants is one which will win for him the commendation of all who appreciate the present situation of our national affairs. The whole parish will unite in wishing Mr Morrison's God's blessing and a safe return.

After Robert Morrison died, the *Chester Chronicle* wrote about his decision to enlist:

> As a clergyman he might have remained without criticism fulfilling his parochial duties, but once his conscience has decided upon the true course, it was not in his nature to choose an easier way of service.

From Cheshire, Robert Morrison went to Bristol for training and he was finally commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Cheshire Regiment. Military training took him to Oswestry, and from his camp he wrote regularly back to Hoole. In one letter he enclosed a cheque and asked the Reverend Pavitt to use the money to buy some new service books for the church, though he wanted his donation to be kept secret.

In October 1916 he was given some final leave before he was sent to France, so he used the days and returned to Cheshire to see some old friends. On 1 October , the first Sunday of the month, he went back to All Saints and read evening prayers, and the parishioners

were delighted 'to have him again in their midst'. The following Sunday, 8 October, he turned up again at All Saints, and this unscheduled appearance was his final visit before he left for France. Once he got to the front line, Robert Morrison kept in regular contact with the Reverend Pavitt, the vicar of All Saints. In his letters back to Cheshire the former curate talked about the conditions that he and his comrades were experiencing, and he often wrote about his faith and how it was helping him in the face of battle.

After Robert's death, the Reverend Pavitt said that his former colleague's Christian belief was strong. In the trenches, Morrison involved the men in worship. As the Reverend Pavitt recalled: 'One letter described a little service he had held for his men in a dug-out, at which he spoke a few words in the name of Christ.' Morrison's faith was central to his life as a clergyman and a soldier; sentiments that were reflected in the tribute that appeared in the parish magazine:

> One thing we may rejoice to know from his own testimony – though we could have never doubted it – and that is when he received his baptism of fire, and as he went about his hazardous duties, he was intensely conscious of the unseen Presence of his Lord ever near him.

Morrison was a regular correspondent, and also sent postcards to parishioners with short messages, often containing helpful words and kind thoughts. He had been at the frontline for one month when he was killed in action on Monday 13 November. When the news reached Cheshire some days later, the Reverend Pavitt told parishioners:

> To many of you, as to myself, this has come as a great shock, and is a source of very real personal sorrow. [...] Let it suffice that the whole parish mourns his loss.

News of Robert Morrison's death travelled quickly across the parish and was reported widely in newspapers. He was twenty-eight years old, and had he survived the war it was clear he could easily have returned to a position in the ministry and carved a career in the Church of England. He was not married, and in his will, which he had finalised some months earlier, he left all his possessions to his father, George Albert Morrison, who was a draper in Dublin. When Robert's belongings were shipped back to his family in Ireland they included the personal communion set that he had been given by the parishioners of All Saints as a leaving present. Later, the family presented the set back to the church, where it is still in use.

Robert Morrison's life is commemorated in the church, which boasts a stained-glass window in his honour, and his name appears on a Great War memorial at Trinity College in Dublin. He is remembered as a hard-working student, a talented sportsman, a soldier and a clergyman. Over a four-year period he played wonderful hockey for Ireland and took part in some memorable games. In 1912 he was part of the Irish team that travelled to Newport to play Wales as part of the international championship.

Before the match began a photograph was taken of members of the Irish team and officials. The formal picture featured players in their white-collared team shirts and backroom staff wearing dark overcoats and large boots.

A century on, the black-and-white picture stands as a reminder of the contribution Irish hockey players made to the Great War. Sitting cross-legged in the front row on a mat is Robert Morrison. He is holding his hockey stick tightly and staring at the camera, looking very young. Beside him is Harold Simms, who like Morrison appears boyish and intense. Behind Simms, in the centre of the picture, sits his Banbridge clubmate and Ireland captain Edmund Smyth. By the end of the Great War, Smyth, Morrison and Simms would all be dead.

That afternoon in Monmouthshire, all three players helped Ireland to beat Wales. In the previous year the two Ulstermen made

their Irish debuts, and the selectors decided to keep faith in them for the 1912 season.

Smyth was a natural sportsman who enjoyed hockey, rugby, tennis and golf. He played rugby for the north of Ireland club, and was often seen on the golf course at Royal County Down. In his spare time he also played tennis, and was an active member of the Windsor Tennis Club in Belfast. Sport ran in the family, and his brother, Robbie Stewart Smyth, who is featured elsewhere in this book, was an Irish rugby international and a British Lion. Like Edmund, Robbie would die during the Great War.

Edmund was the son of William and Jane Smyth of Brookfield in Banbridge in County Down.He was educated at St Columba's College in Dublin, and then continued his studies at Owens College in Manchester. Well known in business circles, he was a managing director of a company in Lisburn and had a similar position at a firm of weavers in Banbridge. Smyth was well built, athletic, and had strong leadership skills, so was a welcome addition to the Banbridge hockey club. One of the oldest clubs in Ireland, it was founded in 1897, and over the last 100 years has produced a long list of players who have gone on to play international hockey.

In 1907 Banbridge established themselves as one of the top teams in the country when they brought the Irish Cup to Ulster for the first time after they defeated Palmerston in the final. It was a big event for the town, and when the winning team arrived home they were greeted by a band and well-wishers gathered on the streets. The players then boarded a lorry and toured the town to show off the trophy.

Such was the talent in the Banbridge side that many team players were automatic selections for Ulster. Harold Simms and Edmund Smyth received call-ups to the Ulster squad, and in 1911, when the provincial side beat Connaught 9–0, the two men were on the scoresheet. Smyth's talents were finally recognised on a wider stage when he was selected to play for Ireland during the traditional Four Nations Championship in 1911. His first game was in Dublin against Wales on 25 February at the Park Avenue grounds. The weather was

good except for a strong wind, which Ireland had the advantage of in the first half. Debutant Smyth played well, and the visitors were beaten 3–0 by an Irish side that included Smyth's clubmate Harold Simms.

Harold Couser Simms, or simply H.C. Simms as he was often referred to, was the son of James and Marianne, who lived in Bridge Street in Banbridge. James Simms was well known in the town because he was a pharmacist. In the 1912 season Smyth and Simms played together in every home international, and they enjoyed victories against Scotland and Wales. The game in Newport marked a personal triumph for Smyth as he was chosen to be team captain. After the euphoria of winning two games, both men came back to earth when they experienced the infamous 10–3 defeat by England. Despite the scoreline, Harold Simms made an impact on the England game when he grabbed two goals for Ireland.

Smyth's international career ended in 1912, but Simms played on and enjoyed a series of matches with the Irish team in the 1914 season when he played in all three of the Home Nations games. His goal-scoring ability proved invaluable, and he found the net regularly and helped Ireland to beat Scotland 4–2 in Dublin, and was instrumental in the 2–1 victory against Wales in Cardiff. The deciding game in Birmingham ended in a 2–2 draw, so the 1914 championship, which would be the last until 1920, was shared between England and Ireland.

By 1915, as the Great War took hold, many of those who had once been leading figures in Irish hockey were in British military uniform. Edmund Smyth was originally a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and helped to recruit dozens of men from the Lisburn area into the colours. He was gazetted into the 11th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, and by 1915 was promoted to the rank of captain. He saw action at the front as a member of the British Expeditionary Force, and served in France from 1915 and into 1916. As Edmund Smyth got used to life at the front line, so too did Harold Couser Simms, who became a gunner with the Royal Garrison Artillery.

In April 1916 the reality of the war hit home for Edmund Smyth

when he received the awful news about his brother's death. Robbie Smyth, who was a major in the Royal Army Medical Corps, was invalided as a result of gas poisoning, and was being cared for in London. His injuries were so severe that in April 1916 he died. His body was brought back to Ireland, and he was buried in Banbridge.

In July 1916, as part of the Somme offensive, Edmund nearly lost his life when he was seriously injured near Thiepval. He was removed from the frontline for treatment, though he was not away from the action for long. He was appointed second in command of the battalion with the rank of major, and although he was offered the chance of leading a different Belfast battalion as a lieutenant-colonel, he declined, preferring to stay with men from his own area.

In September 1916 Harold Simms was killed on the Western Front. He died in action and was buried at the Dive Copse Cemetery, which is in Sailly-le-Sec. He was just twenty-five years old. Fifteen months later, his Banbridge and Ireland teammate Edmund Smyth lost his life.

On 3 December 1917 the Ulsterman was with the Royal Irish Rifles and was involved in reconnaissance duty near Cambrai when he was killed by a German shell. His death shocked the men, many of whom had known him for a number of years, and it was clear he was well regarded by the army hierarchy. The news reached the Banbridge area within a few days, where it was reported in the local newspapers. After he was informed, Brigadier-General Griffith wrote to Smyth's family:

> I had a great admiration and liking for your son, who was one of the finest officers in the Brigade, and is a great loss to us. I was particularly anxious to have him as a battalion commander. [...] I know how poor my efforts at sympathy must be, but I think you would like to know in what high estimation we held your son and what genuine sorrow all of us who have served with him feel at the loss of a good friend and gallant comrade.

Smyth was honoured for his actions in uniform and was the recipient of the Military Cross. He was in charge of the battalion when it captured a number of German prisoners and several machine guns, and Smyth was praised for showing 'great devotion to duty and exceptional powers of organisation'. He also featured in the *London Gazette* and was Mentioned in Despatches by Field Marshal Douglas Haig for 'gallant and distinguished service in the field'.

Edmund Smyth played for Ireland on four occasions, and his greatest international triumph was when he was the victorious team captain in the game against Wales in 1912. That was the occasion when Smyth, Simms and Robert Morrison were all pictured together before the game began. Also in the photograph that day was another hockey player who saw military service in the Great War.

Sitting beside Edmund Smyth, cradling his stick and looking rather apprehensive, was Thomas Frood Perrin, who was known simply as T.F. Perrin. His career spanned the four years leading up to the outbreak of the war in August 1914, and although he survived the conflict, he died in military service in 1920.

Perrin, who was a talented centre half, played for the Monkstown club, which was popular with members of the British military who enjoyed sport when they were off duty. Although he had a reputation as a hard-working defender, Perrin first began life as a goalkeeper, and at Avoca School in Blackrock he proved to be a most capable shot-stopper. Fast, yet small in stature, he was persuaded to change to an outfield position, and it was as a defensive player that he earned international accolades.

Perrin's debut came for Ireland in the 1910 international season, and in that year he was selected for the traditional games against England, Scotland and Wales. Perrin also played in the match against Scotland in 1912, which resulted in Ireland winning by one goal to nil. He also starred in the infamous game in Beckenham, which is described earlier in this chapter and ended in an English victory by ten goals to three.

However, in Birmingham in March 1914, he had much better luck, and Ireland provided a much closer contest. Perrin and his

fellow Irishmen played some outstanding hockey against a very strong English side. The game ended in a 2–2 draw, and the championship honours were shared. Perrin was one of the star Irish players that day, and his performance was applauded by the crowd as the teams left the pitch.

He was highly thought of by many, and due to his size and ability he was referred to by some spectators as the 'wee marvel'. The English player S.H. Shoveller, who played against him in Birmingham, was a big admirer of Perrin's, and he described him as 'diminutive and uncannily quick'. The English match brought the international season to a close and also marked Perrin's last appearance in an Irish shirt. In total he lined out for Ireland on thirteen occasions, and during this period he was one of the country's most impressive players. He saw active service with the Royal Irish Regiment at the Battle of the Somme, where he was injured, though he survived the war. However, he died on 24 May 1920 on military service in Alexandria in Egypt, where he is buried.

Although Perrin survived the war, a number of others who played the game at the highest level did not return home, and Irish hockey lost some of its brightest stars. Doddy Perrin's teammate George Karney made his only appearance in an Irish hockey shirt in 1914 in the game against Scotland, and he was another who lost his life in the war.

Born in Edinburgh, George Wolfe Karney was educated at the John Ivory School in New Ross in County Wexford, and later at Cork. He was an able sportsman and a member of the Barrow Boat Club. His father, Joseph, was a civil servant with the Inland Revenue, and the family lived in New Ross before moving to Rathmines in Dublin. Karney began playing hockey with the Dundrum club, and he caught the eye of the Irish selectors in early 1914.

He was chosen for the Scotland match, which took place in Dublin. Ireland won by four goals to two, with Harold Simms grabbing two of the Irish goals. The war effectively ended any hopes of Karney extending his run of games in Irish colours, and like many other sportsmen he decided to join the 7th Battalion of the Royal

Dublin Fusiliers when hostilities broke out across Europe.

Karney was made a lance-corporal, and in August 1915 was with his comrades in Suvla Bay as they tried in vain to do battle with the Turkish forces. In the chaos and confusion of war he was killed on 16 August, and his body was never discovered. He was later commemorated at the family plot back in County Dublin and remembered alongside his brother, David, who also served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and who died in France in 1918. The two Karney brothers' names were recorded along with the name of their father, who died in 1921. The inscription reads: 'They were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided. In Christ'. When he died, George Karney was twenty-six years old.

By 1917 Irish hockey officials were used to hearing about the deaths of former players on the Western Front. It was a pattern that began within weeks of the war commencing, and the first international to lose his life was William Ball, who made his debut in 1910.

Born on 27 September 1889, William Ormsby Wyndham Ball was the younger son of Henry and Elizabeth Ball, who lived at Palmerston Park in Dublin. Like Robert Morrison, he was a talented hockey forward and a member of the Dublin University team. In his first year at international level he played against England, Scotland and Wales. England won 4–1, whilst Ireland beat Scotland 4–0 in a match that saw the two students Ball and Morrison play together in the Irish forward line. The pair also featured in February 1910 when Ireland comprehensively beat the Welsh by six goals to nil. Away from the hockey pitch, William Ball's other two loves were the military and medicine. He was a member of the Officer Training Corps, and with his medical skills he was a very useful addition to the unit. At college the young Dubliner was a well-respected medical student who worked hard and gained top marks.

In 1911 and in the following year he was a resident student at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital in Dublin, which had a good track record of producing talented and dedicated doctors. Ball's studying paid off, and after he obtained his medical degree he decided to embark on a

military career, becoming a commissioned officer in 1913 with the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was stationed in Aldershot, and when the war broke out he was attached to the 2nd Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment as a lieutenant, and was sent to the front in August 1914. He was involved with caring for troops during the retreat from Mons, and the first few weeks of battle were quite chaotic for the relatively inexperienced medic. He witnessed the full horror of warfare, and was involved in a series of near misses. His horse was shot, on another occasion a bullet penetrated his water bottle, and on a third occasion a shell landed very close to him but left him uninjured.

On 26 September 1914, his luck finally ran out. As he tended to the wounded at one of the dressing stations on the battlefield at Aisne, he was killed by a shell. He was twenty-four years of age, and became the first Irish international hockey player to be killed in the Great War. The details of his death reached Dublin a number of days later, in time for the Irish Hockey Union's Annual General Meeting on 3 October. There was little for officials to talk about since the Ulster Branch had decided to postpone games for the foreseeable future, and all international matches were on hold because of the war. Naturally, William Ball's death was mentioned during the gathering and it was agreed that condolences should be sent to his relatives. Sadly, sending letters of sympathy to the families of soldiers would become a common occurrence for Irish hockey officials, and in the months that followed William Ball's death a number of other international players would also lose their lives.

Falkiner Melton Hewson was a career soldier and a sportsman who made his mark on the hockey field and on the battlefield.Born in Dublin on 30 May 1885, he went to a grammar school in Tipperary, then studied medicine and trained at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. Away from the medical world Hewson was a talented hockey player who had great speed, and so inevitably he began playing on the wing. He was a member of the Palmerston club, which was founded in 1893, and at the turn of the century became one of most successful teams in Irish hockey. Much of their strength rested

on the Peterson brothers, Jack and Walter, who played at the heart of the team's defence. The two men played for Ireland and played in the Olympic Games final in 1908, which England won 8–1.

By 1904 Falkiner Hewson was a key member of the Palmerston side, and his performances were attracting attention in newspapers in Ireland and beyond. Palmerston secured the Irish Cup three years in a row from 1903 until 1905, and they were regarded as the undisputed kings of Irish hockey. Hewson was a very clever player, and his ability with a hockey stick, and in particular his first touch, was much admired. His skill was referred to in the book *The Complete Hockey Player,* which in one chapter discussed the use of a two-handed reverse stroke by attacking players. The book stated that, 'Irish players seem to employ it more and better than the English.' It also reported that 'F.M. Hewson, a distinguished Irish left-winger, is the first exponent of this emergency stroke.'

Hewson's strong performances for Palmerston resulted in a selection for Ireland, and in 1904 he made his debut for the international team in games against England, Scotland and Wales. His first season in Irish colours proved most successful, with Hewson and his teammates performing a clean sweep in all the Home Nations games. In Abergavenny he helped the side to a 4–2 victory over Wales, and he got on the scoresheet in Belfast during an impressive 8–2 win over Scotland. In Dublin, Hewson and the rest of the Irish team made history against England when they secured their first ever win over the 'old enemy' in a thrilling game that ended with the Irish in front by 3–2.

Hewson's initial performances impressed the selectors, and he returned to the Irish side in 1905 for games against Scotland and England.

In early March, Hewson and the rest of the Irish team travelled to Glasgow and easily got the better of the home side in a 5–0 victory. Buoyed up by their success, the Irish players travelled to Surbiton to take on England in a game that one correspondent described as 'the most interesting encounter of the series'.

In front of the home crowd England performed strongly, and

Ireland responded well with the Peterson brothers 'playing brilliantly'. However, the speed of the English attack proved to be the difference between the two teams, and by the end of the game they scored four goals with the Irish only managing one in reply. Despite the defeat, Hewson was one of the few Irish attacking players whose strong performance was highlighted in the press.

In 1906 he was again selected for Ireland, and played in all the matches in the Four Nations Championship. The results had a ring of familiarity about them as Ireland again beat Wales in a match that took place in Cardiff for the first time. Hewson scored twice in a 3–0 victory, and one reporter declared that 'the Irish showed themselves superior in all points of the game'. Ireland also triumphed against Scotland, and in front of a Belfast crowd put seven goals past the Scottish goalkeeper, conceding only one. Rather predictably, England beat Ireland in Dublin, though this time the margin was only by two goals to one.

Hewson's final international appearance for Ireland was against England the following year at Bromley, in what was the thirteenth occasion the two sides had met, and it proved most unlucky for the visitors. The home team had the upper hand; England's defence was very strong and the Irish forwards were 'practically hopeless against them'. England dominated the game and were the easy winners by five goals to nil.

As Falkiner Hewson's international career ended his life took a new turn, and in 1908 he became a lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps. His promotion was contained in the pages of the *London Gazette* in March 1908, and he would remain at that rank until he was made a captain in 1911.

When the war broke out in 1914 he served as a medical officer in France with the 1st Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders, and the following year he was Mentioned in Despatches. He survived the conflict in Europe, but in the final weeks of the war, when he was stationed in India, he contracted influenza and died in October 1918. He was buried in Rajputana, and back in Ireland he is commemorated on a number of memorials.

Out of all the Irish hockey players who saw action in the Great War, there is one individual whose legacy still endures today, yet he never wore the colours of Ireland. John George Anderson was born in Banbridge on New Year's Eve in 1889, the third son of James and Mary Anderson, who lived at Roselawn in the town. The family were the owners of James Anderson and Co., which was a bleaching works for yarn at Ballydown. From 1902 until 1906 John was sent to Campbell College in Belfast, and from there he continued his education at Edinburgh University, where he studied medicine.

Away from the classroom he was a keen sportsman. In the winter months he played hockey, and in the summer afternoons he turned his attention to cricket. In the university cricket team Anderson probably felt at home since he played alongside some Campbell College old boys Alfred Squire Taylor, who would later play rugby for Ireland, and John Hamilton Hood.

Like Anderson, Alfred Squire Taylor died in World War One. The story of his sporting career and his military service is detailed in another chapter of this book. It was in Scotland that John George Anderson first began to shine as a hockey player, and he was soon a member of the university team. After he got his university colours it was inevitable that there would be further honours, and in 1910 he travelled to Dublin to play for Ulster in an interprovincial game. Anderson was selected to play as one of the halfbacks, and fellow Banbridge native Edmund Smyth appeared in the forward line.

Anderson's performances with Ulster did not lead to an Irish international call-up. Instead, days after he travelled to Dublin to play in the interprovincial match, he was named in the Scotland team for the game against Wales.

After his debut in February 1910, Anderson kept his place in the side and he made the journey to Dublin the following month to take on the Irish team, which included some familiar faces. The Scottish contingent arrived in Ireland the day before the game and spent the night in the Hotel Metropole. The next day they made their way to the Union Ground at Sydney Parade. Anderson and his new teammates may have been optimistic about their chances since the

year before they had beaten Ireland 3–2 in Glasgow. That victory, however, was rare, and was the first time Ireland had been defeated since the annual competition began back in 1902.

It was not a successful homecoming for Anderson because Ireland proved too strong for the visitors, and won handsomely by four goals to nil.

From 1910 to 1913 John George Anderson played six times for Scotland, and his last appearance against Ireland was in Glasgow. The game in March 1913 went Ireland's way, and Anderson was on the losing side as Scotland were defeated by two goals to one.

When the war arrived Anderson appears to have been keen to put his skills to good use, and like many medical students he chose to join the Royal Army Medical Corps. In October 1914 he was commissioned, initially as a lieutenant in the 3rd Highland Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps, and he saw action in France in 1915.

In 1916 he was injured in service, and he came home in April of that year to recover. His soldiering skills earned him a promotion to the rank of captain, and he received a new posting as a medical officer with the Black Watch. In the front line his skills were much in demand, and the Ulsterman often compromised his own safety as he treated the wounded and the dying. On countless occasions he attended to comrades in the line of fire, and in 1918 he was officially recognised for his bravery when he was awarded the Military Cross. His honour was made public in January when the announcement appeared in the pages of the *London Gazette*.

Three months later, Anderson was at the heart of front-line action during the massive German offensive of March 1918. As usual he spent much of his time attending to injured comrades, but was fatally injured in a German attack and died. His body was never recovered, and he was officially listed as missing.

When news of his passing reached home, friends and family were saddened, and after the war ended there was a strong desire to acknowledge publicly his life and his important contribution to hockey. A memorial was created at Bannside Presbyterian Church,

which marked his passing and recalled how he died in France 'whilst ministering to the wounded'. John's family also wanted to remember his life in hockey, so his older brother, Thomas Anderson, presented a trophy to hockey officials, and to this day the 'Anderson Cup' is a much sought-after prize in the world of Irish hockey.

When the Great War ended, competitive hockey matches resumed in Ireland after a four-year break. The sport, like many others, was decimated, and team members who had been the backbone of clubs the length and breadth of Ireland were missing. There was hardly a team that was not affected by the war, and the list of the dead and wounded hockey players made for sombre reading.

At the Three Rock Rovers club in Dublin, 164 past and present players volunteered for military service, and when the war ended twenty-four had been killed. In Belfast, Cliftonville lost six players and eight were wounded. Eight players from Banbridge lost their lives, with Lisnagarvey losing four of their members.

Key figures from the world of hockey who were instrumental in establishing the game in Ireland also died. They included coaches, administrators and dedicated club men who played the game with a passion. People like Herbert Snowden Findlater, who was one of the founding members of the Monkstown Hockey Club. He served with the famous 7th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, which is chronicled elsewhere in this book and contained dozens of sportsmen. He and his brother, Charlie, a member of Monkstown Rugby Club, both died in the Great War. Charlie died in 1916 at the Somme, and Herbert was killed in Gallipoli in 1915.

When the members of the Ulster Branch of the Irish Hockey Union met for their annual general meeting in September 1919, the mood was understandably downbeat. It was the first time they had convened since the war ended, and proceedings began with a statement from the President, William Heney. He spoke about how many hockey players had joined the military during the four-year conflict and said that no other sport had made such a large response. He also said that there were some 'noticeable examples and those

16. The Ireland hockey team that played Wales in 1912. Robert Morrison is sitting at the front on the left. Beside him is Harold Simms and behind him sits the captain Edmund Smyth. All three would die in the Great War. (Picture courtesy Irish Hockey)

17. Hymie McKee was a talented footballer who played for Cliftonville and Ireland. He joined the Canadian Infantry and died in November 1916. (Picture courtesy Cliftonville FC)

18. Harold Sloan played for Bohemians and captained Ireland. A natural goal scorer, he was one of the greatest players of his generation and helped Bohemians become a major force in Irish football. He was killed in January 1917. (Picture courtesy Ciaran Priestley)

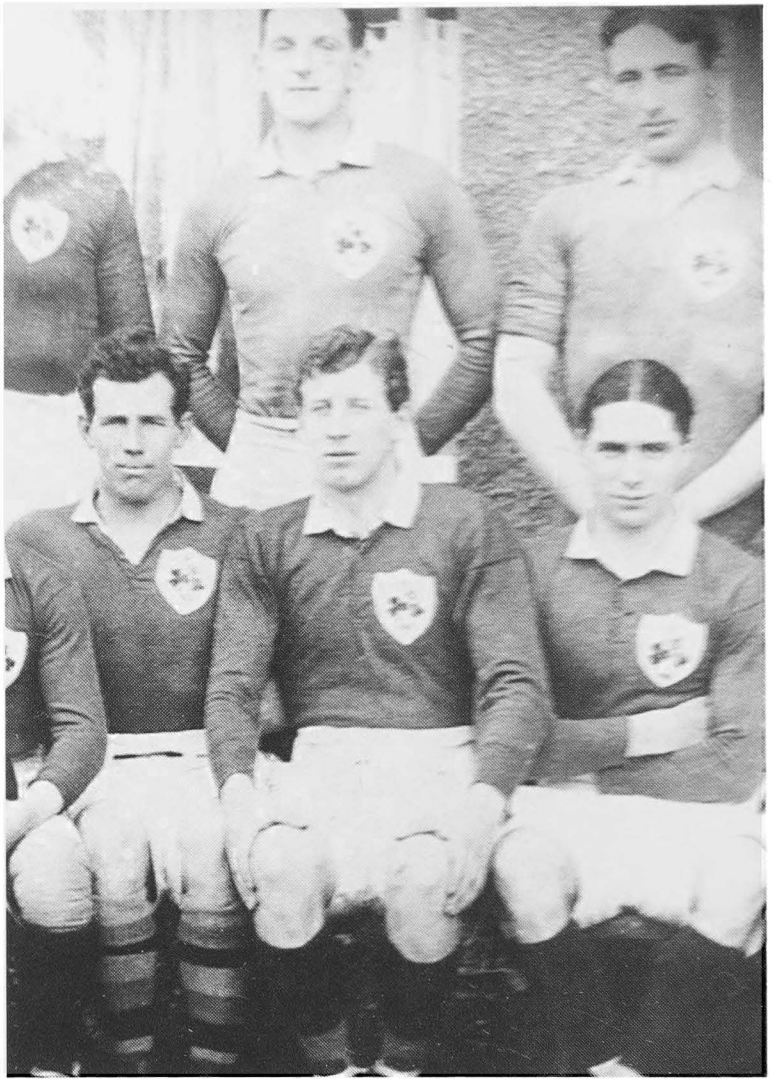
19. Irish rugby team in 1896. George McAllan (pictured lying at the front) was the first schoolboy to play rugby for Ireland. He emigrated to South Africa and died in 1918. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

20. Irish rugby international Ernest Deane (pictured standing, far left) played for Ireland and Monkstown. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. He was killed in September 1915 as he helped wounded comrades. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

21. Arthur Cyril Bateman was a gifted sportsman who played cricket for Ireland. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and died in 1918. His body was never recovered. (Picture courtesy Kevin Cullen)

22. Falkiner Hewson (pictured middle row second from right) was an Irish international hockey player before the Great War. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and saw service with distinction on the Western Front. He died in India in 1918. (Picture courtesy Irish Hockey)

23. Considered by the press and his peers as a 'high class forward', Robert Balderston Burgess played for Ireland and the Barbarians. At school he played in a Portora 1st XV side which is regarded as one of the greatest ever Irish schoolboy teams. In one season they amassed 912 points and conceded just 34. He was killed in 1915. (Picture courtesy Portora Royal School/Robert and Hannah Northridge)

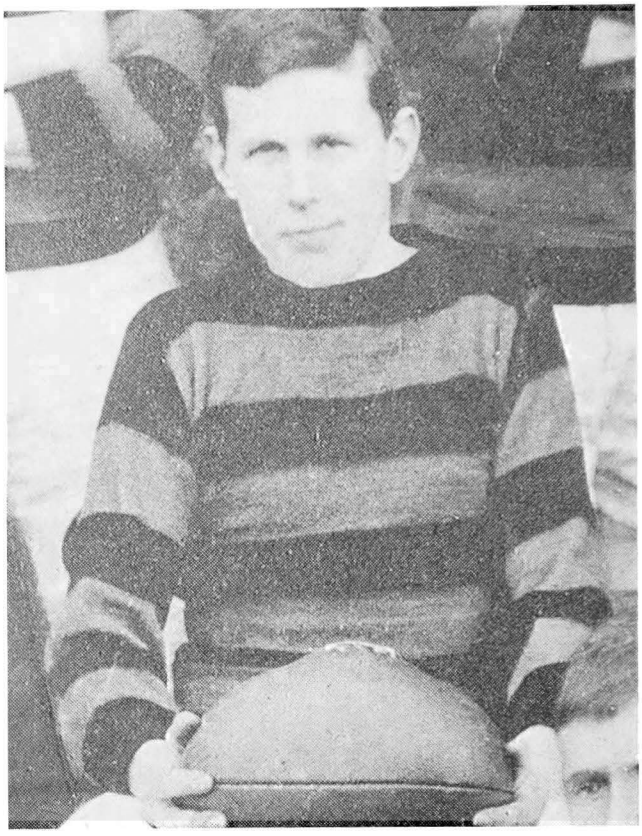


24. Rugby player Albert Lewis Stewart (pictured in the middle of the front row) played for North, Ulster and Ireland. He helped North win the Ulster Senior League in 1909 and made his Irish debut in 1913 against Wales. He was killed near Ypres in 1917. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

25. Mystery surrounds William Hallaran's sole appearance for the Ireland rugby team. He was listed under a pseudonym which may have been used because his father did not approve. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

27. William John Beatty (pictured in the middle row, one from the right) made his debut for the Irish international rugby team in 1910. He played alongside fellow Ulstermen Alfred Squire Taylor and William Victor Edwards when Ireland beat France in 1912 in Paris. Beatty died in 1919 and was posthumously awarded an OBE.(Picture courtesy IRFU archives)

26. William Victor Edwards was a talented sportsman who excelled in many disciplines. In 1913 he became the first person to swim across Belfast Lough. He was a competent water polo player and played rugby for Ulster and Ireland. He was killed in Jerusalem in 1917. (Picture courtesy IRFU archives)



28. Irish rugby international Robbie Smyth was the brother of Irish hockey international Edmund Smyth. Robbie Smyth played for Ulster and Ireland and in 1903 travelled to South Africa as a member of a British Isles team. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and died in 1916 after being gassed in France. (Picture courtesy Royal School Dungannon/Paul Kerr)

GRAND

International Match

Great Britain, Ireland & Allies

Versus

Germany, Austria & Allies

Where Match will be Played:

SOMEWHERE IN GERMANY

Teams:

Unlimited number of players on each side

Referee:

UNITED STATES

Linesmen:

ITALY and HOLLAND

Irishmen wishing to play in this—the greatest Match the world has ever seen—**should enter their names at once** at the nearest Recruiting Office so that they may be thoroughly trained for the Great Day.

Medals will be presented after the Match.

(3265) Wt. P. 621— 50,000 3/15 Alex. Thom & Co., Ltd., Dublin.

29. The War Office often used sporting references to try to persuade sportsmen to enlist. (Picture courtesy Public Record Office Northern Ireland)

would remain a credit to the game'. Heney ended his address by proposing that condolences be offered to the families of all those players who died during the war.

Like the other sports of football, rugby, cricket and the GAA, the world of hockey lost some of their brightest stars on the battlefields of France and Flanders and in Gallipoli. The game recovered, albeit slowly, and international fixtures resumed in 1920, but the shadow of the Great War hung over the sport, as it did over Irish and British society.

In March 1921 the Irish team travelled to London to play England at Beckenham in the presence of King George V. It was the first time an Irish side had made the trip since the end of hostilities. On the morning of the game the players visited the Cenotaph in Whitehall and laid a shamrock wreath in memory of the Irish players who died during the conflict. They came to pause and recall the lives of men like Edmund Smyth, Harold Simms, William Ball and Falkiner Hewson, and the Anglican curate Robert Morrison, who in 1916 had answered a very different calling.

11 For Club and Country

'A HIGH CLASS FORWARD, CLEVER WITH HANDS AND FEET, AND IS ALWAYS ON THE BALL.'

– Tribute to Robert Balderston Burgess, Irish rugby international, 1915.

In the French town of Armentieres, on a December afternoon in 1915, Captain Robert Burgess gripped the handlebars of his bicycle and pedalled along the Rue de Dunkerque.

This was familiar territory for the Dubliner, and as he made his way along the road he was surrounded by the signs and sounds of battle. The area was dangerous, and he knew he was within the enemy's line of fire since many of the nearby buildings displayed the scars of months of German shelling. The focal point was the town square, which was given the name 'eleven o'clock square' after German shelling resulted in the clock's hands being permanently stuck at eleven o'clock.

Close to the Belgian border, this part of northern France was

home to British troops for over a year, and Armentieres was a key staging post in the route to and from the trenches. Units were billeted in the town, it was a strategic depot for equipment and stores, and the railway line was essential to the movement of men and machines. Soldiers and French civilians mixed freely on the streets, and the town often hosted servicemen who wanted food or drink or a bit of relaxation away from the horror of war. Captain Burgess knew the geography well, but he also knew the risks. He had been in uniform since November 1914, initially joining the Army Service Corps, which he had requested, and then being transferred to the Inland Water Transport Unit, which was part of the Royal Engineers. A popular, well-liked officer, he had been promoted quickly and became a captain just two months after he obtained a commission as a 2nd lieutenant.

Shortly after lunchtime on 9 December, he was on his bicycle close to the town centre of Armentieres, with fellow officer Lieutenant O'Brien. The men were about 10 yards apart when suddenly a shell exploded between the two cycles, throwing Burgess to the ground. O'Brien rushed to aid his friend and managed to move him into a nearby house. He attracted the help of a French gendarme, and with the assistance of two other men he was able to get his injured colleague onto a stretcher. The small group then carried the injured Burgess to a field ambulance, but there was little that could be done to help him. The blast was fatal and Burgess was dying. Later, at a nearby casualty clearing station, the Royal Engineers captain died of his wounds. Burgess, who was single and twenty-four years old, was the fourth Irish rugby international to be killed in the Great War.

The news of his death would soon reach his family, and understandably it would also make column inches in the newspapers back home.

Born on Christmas Day in 1890, he was the son of Henry and Agnes Burgess, and he was given his mother's maiden name and christened Robert Balderston. He was one of three children and had two sisters and a step-brother and a step-sister from his father's first

marriage. His father worked for the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company, and the family lived in Kingstown in County Dublin. As a young boy Burgess was sent to County Fermanagh to board at Portora School, set in one of the most picturesque parts of Ireland. At the turn of the century this Enniskillen establishment had the reputation of being the 'Eton of Ireland', and also had a fine sporting tradition, which clearly appealed to the young boarder.

Robert Burgess was at home in the rolling countryside that surrounded the waterways of Fermanagh. He excelled at many team games, but it was as a rugby player and a cricketer that he began to make a name for himself.

In April 1906 he began playing for the second fifteen at rugby, and turned out on the cricket field as well. His performances were good, and by the end of the cricket season it was reported that he had 'improved in batting' and was a 'safe field', although it was noted that he was 'somewhat slow in getting down and returning the ball'.

The next year he continued to play rugby for the second fifteen, and within a few months he was promoted to the first fifteen. In 1908 he turned out for the Portora team in the final of the Schools Cup against Coleraine Academical Institution, an occasion that to this day is still regarded in Northern Ireland as the highlight of any schoolboy's rugby career. The match was a one-sided affair, and Portora's superiority in all parts of the pitch was obvious from the early stages. The Enniskillen boys were in a different class to their rivals from Coleraine, and they triumphed by a staggering 52 points to nil.

Robert Burgess received high praise for his work rate and was described as a 'high class forward, clever with hands and feet, and is always on the ball'. Dickie Lloyd, who would become a legendary player, was a contemporary of Burgess, and the two boys enjoyed great success together in the school team. Lloyd was a talented fly-half, who like Burgess would go on to play for Trinity College in Dublin and Ireland. Lloyd made his international debut whilst he was still a student, and he would represent his country nineteen times and have the honour of captaining Ireland.

Burgess did not have Lloyd's pace or kicking prowess, but he was a great tackler who read the game well. The two boys were part of the school fifteen that produced seven internationals. The side built up a reputation for winning games with style and panache, and even today the boys from 1908 are regarded as one of the finest school teams in the history of the Irish game. Portora repeated their success in the Schools Cup by securing a final place the following year against the first fifteen from Coleraine Academical Institution.

The boys from County Fermanagh were just as impressive, and beat their rivals, this time by forty-two points to nil. Such was Enniskillen's strength that an Ulster boys' team contained the entire Portora back line, and the side defeated Leinster schools by seventy-two points to nil.

Robert Burgess was regarded as an 'untiring worker and clever in the loose'. He was also viewed by the school selectors as 'a good tackler and only wants weight to make him a first rate forward'. The Portora team were unstoppable, and their statistics for the season proved that they were the finest school side in Ireland. They played twenty-three games and won all of them, amassing an amazing 912 points whilst conceding just 34 in the entire season.

Rugby only filled a portion of Robert Burgess's leisure time, and in the summer of 1909 he continued to play cricket. He was better with the ball than the bat, and established a reputation for being a 'successful slow bowler, with some spin and swerve'. Away from the crease he took aim with a rifle and was a member of the school's shooting team. Such was the emphasis on sport at Portora that a report by the Education Board in 1910 noted that it was affecting teaching and education officials requested that the school place more emphasis on academic interests. Burgess was able to obtain success in the classroom and on the sports field, and by the time he left the picturesque lakelands of Fermanagh he had qualifications and an impressive sporting CV.

From the idyllic surroundings of Portora, Burgess returned home to the hustle and bustle of Dublin to study at Trinity College in Dublin, where he continued to enjoy rugby and turned out

frequently for the college side. His performances began to attract the attention of others, and his skills as a tough-tackling forward were soon in demand beyond the confines of university rugby.

At the age of twenty-one he received his first international call-up for a game in Dublin against the visiting South Africans. The match against the tourists was much anticipated since on the last occasion the two teams played the scoreline was very close, and it produced a thrilling encounter. A highlight of the previous game in Belfast in 1906 was a stunning try by Irish back Basil Maclear, who is himself the subject of a separate chapter in this book. The press and the Irish sporting public clearly hoped for a repeat performance when the South Africans arrived in Dublin in November 1912.

The game at Lansdowne Road was played before a crowd of 10,000 spectators on a pitch that was rock hard after an overnight frost. Robert Burgess was one of seven Irish debutants, and he found himself running out alongside his old schoolmate and college friend Dickie Lloyd, who was playing his eleventh game in Irish colours.

For Burgess and Lloyd, it would prove to be a most frustrating day on the icebound pitch. Ireland won the toss and began the game with the wind at their backs, though the conditions were the least of their problems.

From the moment the game kicked off, the difference between the two sides became obvious. South Africa dominated the early proceedings and produced a textbook display of passing, running and tackling. The visitors scored a try after just three minutes, and by half-time they were in the lead by 12 points to nil. In the second half the situation got worse for the Irish team, and South Africa turned pressure into points and made the home side look very ordinary. When the full-time whistle sounded the South Africans were victorious by 38 points to nil.

The result marked the biggest defeat Ireland had ever suffered, and the large crowd went home after witnessing one of the poorest displays they had ever seen from men in an Irish jersey. The watching sportswriters did little to hide the blushes of the Irish players. The *Manchester Courier*'s correspondent stated that 'Ireland

indeed gave a truly deplorable exhibition.' The *Yorkshire Post* reported that 'The Irishmen were completely and utterly outplayed'. The *Aberdeen Journal*'s correspondent said the home side showed 'no combination for attack and no judgement in dealing with the finely delivered attacks of the Colonials'. It was a disappointing result for Robert Burgess, and although he was not singled out for particular criticism by the press his performance was not good enough to warrant a recall, and his appearance against the mighty South Africa was to be his only Irish cap. His Portora teammate Dickie Lloyd was more fortunate, and would go on to make eight more international appearances.

Robert Burgess was called to the Bar in 1914 and was well known in the legal world in Dublin and across Ireland. He continued to play rugby and represented the Barbarians, and when he was not on the rugby field he often played a round of golf at the Kingstown Golf Club.

It was in November 1914 that he finally joined up and filled in his attestation papers. Prior to enlisting he had done voluntary work in a Casualty Department in the North Wall area of Dublin, and when he was asked by recruiting staff what regiment he wanted he said that he would like to be a 'member of the Army Service Corps'. He was originally part of the Transport Army Service Corps, was transferred to the Royal Engineers, and was later attached to the Inland Water Transport Service, a unit that organised the delivery of equipment and supplies through the use of barges.

Life in the military appeared to suit Robert Burgess. He took his new responsibilities seriously, and he was a well-liked and popular officer. He was highly thought of by his superiors and moved quickly from his initial appointment of 2nd lieutenant to become a captain.

In December 1915, after he was hit by a shell, he was taken to the No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station, which is where he died from his wounds. A day later a telegraph was despatched from the War Office in London to the Burgess family home. It simply said that Robert had 'died of wounds today' and 'Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.'

Robert Burgess was buried in a grave at the Civil Cemetery in Bailleul, and his parents were informed of the precise location. Outstanding army pay was forwarded to his father, Henry Givens Burgess, and he also received Robert's possessions from one of his comrades, Lieutenant R. Almack, who met him when he was in Dublin on leave.

Across the island of Ireland, Robert Balderston Burgess is remembered on memorials in a variety of locations that were all part of his life. They include a commemoration at Trinity College in Dublin and at Portora in Enniskillen, where he studied, and he is remembered in the law courts in Belfast and Dublin, where he practised. His name is included on war memorials in a number of Dublin churches, including Monkstown Parish Church, and he is also commemorated on his parents' gravestone at Deansgrange Cemetery in Dublin.

As Robert Burgess was being mourned by his comrades in France and by his family in Ireland, another of his rugby contemporaries was fighting elsewhere on the Western Front. Fellow Irish international Albert Lewis Stewart, who had also come through the ranks of schoolboy rugby and was a member of the 36th Ulster Division, was also serving in France. He joined the 10th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles in September 1914 just a few weeks after the war broke out, and he arrived in France just over a year later.

Stewart took to soldiering in the same way he approached a rugby match, and he had a reputation for being determined and courageous.

He was born in Belfast in February 1889 to James and Isabella Stewart, and he attended the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, or 'Inst' as it was more affectionately known. Back in the early 1900s, as it is today, rugby was taken very seriously by the school authorities, and Stewart quickly learnt the rudiments of the game and proved to be an asset for the first fifteen. He played at full back and at centre, and went on to become the vice-captain of the team. His accuracy in front of goal meant that he was relied on to take penalties and convert tries, and he rarely disappointed his

teammates. His kicking, running and tackling ability showed that he was one of the finest young players of his generation, and he was naturally selected to play a number of games for the Ulster schools team.

In the Schools Cup Semi-Final he converted six out of the eight tries that were scored. His reliability in front of the posts meant that when Inst were awarded a penalty he was often called upon, and in his final season for the school team he successfully kicked twenty-four goals.

Stewart's sporting ability was not confined to the rugby pitch, and like many of his peers he was an able cricketer and a fine swimmer and gymnast. He played for the first eleven at cricket and was an energetic fielder and a talented batsman. He also won trophies at athletics and at swimming competitions.

After he left school he trained to become an accountant, and continued to play rugby for the North of Ireland Football Club, or 'North' as they were known colloquially. Stewart was warmly welcomed into the team, and he secured a place in the back line as a centre. With his accurate place kicking and his speed with the ball he became a valuable and trusted player for the Belfast side, who were one of Ireland's leading teams, and he was made vice-captain and then later captain.

In 1909 he was part of the North team that won the Ulster Senior League, and a year later he was in the side that won the Charity Cup. His performances for North brought him to the attention of the wider sporting public and to the notice of the Ulster selection committee, and not surprisingly he was chosen to play for his province. Stewart's Ulster performances were well received, and it was only a matter of time before he was selected to play for his country. His chance came halfway through the 1913 Five Nations Championship, which started rather badly for the Irish side. They were initially beaten by England and also defeated by Scotland at Inverleith in Edinburgh. The Scottish result was particularly disappointing, and even though the home side ending up playing without their fullback for over an hour, Ireland lost by 29 points to

14. The Scottish defeat and the manner of the team's play resulted in the Irish selectors making wholesale changes for the next match against Wales.

In February 1913, Stewart was one of five new caps chosen for the trip to Swansea. On Thursday 6 March the Belfast debutant joined his teammates, and they all travelled by boat to Britain and then journeyed to Shrewsbury, where they stayed overnight. The next evening Stewart and his fellow players arrived in Swansea in good time for the kick-off on Saturday. Ireland desperately needed a win to give their campaign a boost, and their new-look team was under pressure to try and get a result in Wales.

The conditions for rugby were perfect, and in mild weather on a well-maintained pitch both teams ran out in front of a crowd of around 25,000 people. Ireland kicked off with the boot of Dickie Lloyd, and the Ulsterman was soon given the chance to open the scoring for the visitors, but his attempt at goal was wide. Within a few minutes Lloyd got another opportunity to put points on the scoreboard, and Ireland took the lead. The advantage did not last for long, and much to the relief of the home supporters the Welsh quickly levelled the score. For most of the first half the Irish forwards and the Welsh pack enjoyed quite a battle over possession. To the observer it seemed the Irish front and second rows had regained their confidence, and amongst the backs the tackling and running was much better than the side had displayed in their previous encounters. Little divided the two sides, and at half-time the scores were level at 8 points apiece. The second half mirrored the first period, and a series of infringements gave both sides opportunities to increase their lead with kicks at goal. The two busiest players on the pitch were the Irish goal kicker Dickie Lloyd and the Welsh fullback Bancroft.

Albert Stewart made an impressive debut with some fine runs and solid tackling. Ten minutes before the end he charged down a kick by the Welsh back Clem Lewis, and he collected the ball and ran in for an easy try. It was a dream start on his debut for the boy from Belfast. Playing alongside him in the backs and also performing well

was Dickie Lloyd, who secured the conversion. The try by Stewart and the conversion meant Ireland only trailed by 3 points, and as the minutes ticked by it looked like Ireland might be able to draw the game or perhaps even win it. Lloyd, who secured many points throughout the afternoon, had a goal attempt in the closing stages, but he failed to score, which meant that Wales ended the game winning by 16 points to 13.

Even though Ireland lost to Wales, the overall performance in Swansea pleased the Irish selectors and they were particularly impressed by Albert Stewart's try-scoring debut. The Belfast accountant was recalled for the game against France, and in late March he travelled down to Cork for the game.

The match on Easter Monday was Ireland's last game in the championship and gave the home side the opportunity to salvage something from a season that had promised much but had delivered little. Stewart made the journey to Cork with a number of familiar faces, including the talented Dickie Lloyd and Billy Tyrell, who played his rugby with Queen's University in Belfast. Ireland performed well in front of the home crowd and produced their finest performance of the championship.

The home team's passing was superb, and the French had to defend in numbers. Even when they managed to wrestle the ball off the Irish players they rarely got beyond the halfway line. Albert Stewart was involved in a number of Ireland's early moves, and he linked up well on a number of occasions with fly-half Dickie Lloyd, winger Joseph Quinn and fellow centre Alexander Jackson.

Stewart had a great opportunity to score another try to add to the one he scored against Wales, but he was brought down just short of the French line. At half- time Ireland led by 8 points to nil, and in the second half the game continued the way the first period had developed with the home side dominating possession. Matters got rather rough at one stage, but by the end of the match Ireland ran out winners by 24 points to nil. It marked Ireland's greatest triumph over the French and restored some pride after the defeats inflicted by England, Wales and Scotland.

The French result brought the Five Nations Championship to a conclusion, and it meant that France finished last in the table with Ireland in fourth position and Scotland third. England bagged the Grand Slam and the Triple Crown. Wales, who had a good season, only losing one game, ended the season as runners-up.

By the autumn, when rugby fixtures resumed at club and provincial level, the atmosphere in Belfast had changed and the sport found itself subject to the prevailing political climate of the time. The Home Rule crisis dominated the newspapers and young men like Stewart, from a Unionist background, were being encouraged to join the Ulster Volunteer Force. Rugby clubs in Belfast were not immune to these pressures, and players and officials began to consider whether games should be cancelled to allow men to take part in military drills and exercises.

In December 1913, North, Queen's University and Malone rugby clubs all held special meetings to discuss the possibility of suspending training whilst the political crisis ensued. Officials at North took the decision to abandon all matches on Saturday afternoons so that their players could take part in drills. Naturally, the move brought praise from leading Unionists, including Sir Edward Carson, who said that the North club had set a 'splendid example not only to Ireland but to the Empire'. As 1914 began, he also said that he hoped the coming year would be one of 'victory for the opponents of Home Rule'.

Politics aside, Albert Stewart still wanted to play international rugby, and as Sir Edward Carson promoted his New Year message, the young Belfast player was in Paris sporting the colours of Ireland. Stewart was in the French capital, where he gained his third Irish cap as Ireland took on France at the Parc des Princes. The hosts were determined to try and avenge the humiliating defeat they suffered in Cork some nine months earlier, and the game proved very competitive. The weather was very cold, and after days of frost officials placed straw on the pitch to protect the surface.

It was clear from the kick-off that the French were determined to

put the memories of the last game behind them, and for much of the first half they had the upper hand. Ireland had a number of attempts at goal, but they were all unsuccessful, and at the break the French led by 3 points to nil.

The second half was as exciting as the first, and shortly after the restart the French scored a second try, much to the unrestrained delight of the home crowd. The score appeared to spur the Irish players into action, and they took the game to the French. The more the game went on, the more Ireland became the better team, and they were the more inventive in line-outs and in the scrums. The visitors' possession finally turned into points and a couple of tries and a goal finally gave Ireland an 8 points to 6 victory. Albert Stewart again performed well, and returned to Ireland with his record against the French intact. It was his last match in Irish colours.

On 24 September 1914, just days after the Great War began, he decided that he should join the army and volunteer his services. He enlisted and his attestation papers were also signed by Mr Jones, who was the Principal of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and who knew Stewart from his days at Inst. He acknowledged that Stewart had a 'good standard of education', and the trained accountant was clearly seen as officer material. Stewart joined the 10th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, who recruited many young men from the South Belfast area.

The regiment was part of the 36th Ulster Division, and Stewart was commissioned as a second lieutenant and began a period of intensive training in readiness for military action on the Western Front. Initially he was based at a series of depots including Newcastle and Ballykinlar, and he was then transferred to Sussex. According to his military records, stored at the National Archives in Kew, he was promoted to lieutenant in the spring of 1915, and in October of that year he travelled to France to get his first taste of battle. He saw action in France in the winter of 1915 and into 1916, and witnessed the carnage and bloodshed on the first day at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. He showed enormous courage during the

opening days of the fighting on the Somme, and was recommended for a Victoria Cross, although it was never awarded to him. The precise nature of his bravery at the Somme is not detailed in his military records, although one of his comrades in a letter to his father wrote that on the opening day of battle he had done 'such splendid work' and was 'completely worn out'. Albert Stewart was so highly thought of by his superiors that he was promoted to captain and was given the command of the 22nd Machine Gun Company.

In January 1917 another promotion came his way, and he was given the rank of major and was Mentioned in Despatches. Stewart was clearly the kind of individual that the military authorities wanted as an officer. He was courageous and displayed natural leadership skills, and was well liked by those under his command. In the autumn of 1917, as another offensive was being planned against the Germans close to the town of Ypres, Stewart's skills were much in demand.

On 4 October 1917 the Ulsterman and his comrades were in Glencorse Wood near Ypres, and were involved in an ongoing operation to seize ground from the Germans. It was there that Albert Stewart lost his life. Little is known of his final moments, except that he was killed in action.

Five days later, a Post Office telegraph conveyed the news to the Stewart family in Belfast, deeply regretting his death and expressing sympathy. His military allowances were forwarded to his mother, Mrs Isabella Stewart, who also received his medals and his possessions. Albert Stewart's personal belongings contained the usual items you would expect a soldier to carry, and included a pocket wallet, a diary and a cigarette case. Amidst his personal effects there was one unusual item. He carried a ten cent Nicaragua note with him, which he had as some kind of souvenir. Albert Stewart was twenty-eight years old when he died, and was buried by his comrades not far from where he fell at the Hooge Crater Cemetery at Ypres. He was popular both with the soldiers he led and those he reported to in the military hierarchy.

Like the thousands of others whose lives were cut short by the Great War he had much to offer, and had he survived the conflict and returned home he undoubtedly would have found ways to make his mark in society, whether in business or in sport. He was a high achiever, motivated, and with genuine leadership skills, and quickly gained the loyalty of his subordinates. His loss was keenly felt by his family and friends in Belfast, where his local community took pride in his soldiering and sporting achievements.

A Presbyterian, he is commemorated on the Windsor Presbyterian Church Memorial in Belfast in the place where he worshipped before he enlisted. Like hundreds of other promising sportsmen, Stewart's rugby career ended prematurely because of the circumstances of the time. He began his rugby journey in the school team and then played the sport at club and provincial level, ultimately winning three caps for Ireland. Schools rugby has always been the training ground for future internationals, and Ireland's grammar schools have a long tradition of producing players who can compete at the highest level.

In 1896 the Irish selectors became aware of the talent of a Dungannon schoolboy whose skills as a full back were much admired. Seventeen-year-old George Herbert McAllan was the captain of the first fifteen at Royal School Dungannon, and showed great maturity despite his youth. His talent as a kicker and a tackler were much in demand, and as well as playing for the school he played club rugby for Dungannon.

Born in Belfast on 2 February 1879, his father, Alexander, was a bank manager, and the family moved to Monaghan when he was offered the job to run the Provincial Bank in the town. George's early schooling was at the Collegiate School in Monaghan, but in 1893 he moved to Royal School Dungannon when Robert Foster Dill was appointed as headmaster. The new headmaster was keen to encourage McAllan's rugby skills, and even though he was still a teenager he often travelled to play for a number of senior Belfast clubs. According to George's sister, at school more attention was paid to rugby than education. In 1950 she wrote to the school about her

brother. She said that 'rugby was not good for study, as he was allowed to go around playing substitute for Belfast clubs. However, he had a great life and he enjoyed it'.

McAllan's rugby performances at school and club level were exceptional, and in February 1896 he became the first schoolboy to be selected for the Irish international team.

Ireland made a good start to their Four Nations Championship, and in the opening match defeated the favourites, England, by 10 points to nil. The result surprised some observers because in their previous game England had demolished Wales by 25 points to nil in a game at Blackheath.

The team for Ireland's second match against Scotland was expected to be the same as the one that defeated England, but a knee injury to the full back John Fulton meant that selectors had to find a replacement quickly.

Fulton's inability to play led to George McAllan becoming the first ever schoolboy to be selected for Ireland. Undoubtedly, the staff at The Royal School were thrilled that one of their own had been selected. McAllan would set a trend of Dungannon old boys turning out for their country. Robbie Smyth, whose story is also featured in this book, attended the school, and he earned six international caps and appeared for the British Lions. Others like Harold Sugars, Charles Fitzgerald, Herbert Moore and George McConnell would all go on to play rugby for Ireland and serve in the Great War.

In 1896 news of George McAllan's selection for the Scotland game came after the team's success against England, and the mood in the Irish camp was buoyant. There were high hopes, particularly in the Irish newspapers, that the team could capture the Triple Crown just as they had done in 1894. In the run-up to the Scottish game, some reporters suggested that the attendance at Lansdowne Road could be so large that it might break previous attendance records.

The *Freeman's Journal*'s correspondent added to the weight of expectation on Irish shoulders by declaring, on the day of the game: 'It is safe to say that never previously in the history of Irish Rugby Football was there such excited interest taken in any match.' The

report also said that if the Irish side played the same way they did against England then they 'should certainly prove victorious'.

The Scottish team arrived in Dublin the day before the game, and based themselves at the city's Metropole Hotel. The visitors included some new faces in their line-up, and they were keen to put in an impressive performance after they were beaten handsomely by Wales in their last game.

Spectators started arriving at Lansdowne Road shortly after 12 noon, and they were entertained by the band of the Royal Dragoons as kick-off approached. It was cold and gloomy, but dry, when the two teams ran out onto the pitch in front of a 12,000 strong crowd, which included Lord Cadogan, the Lord Lieutenant. The opening stages were dominated by a series of blunders, and poor passing and inaccurate kicking meant that the game remained scoreless.

The second half continued in the same vein as the first, and the two sides effectively cancelled each other out. In the later stages of the game Ireland pressed forward looking for a try, but tough Scottish tackling kept them away from the line. By full-time, even though each team came close to putting points on the board, the game ended as a scoreless draw. The watching journalists were not impressed by the Irish team's display, and described it as 'dire' and 'disappointing'. Whilst the score line and the number of errors were concerning, George McAllan's performance clearly impressed the selectors and the Dungannon teenager retained his place for the next game against Wales.

The Welsh team travelled to Dublin in March 1896 in the full knowledge that if they were defeated Ireland would be crowned winners of the Four Nations Championship. The visitors travelled to the Irish capital in good time, and on the day before the match they went sightseeing in groups across the city. They were taken to Phoenix Park and afterwards to College Park, where they trained and did some match practice. Ireland's poor display against Scotland did little to diminish interest in the game, and the prospect of another Irish championship resulted in a rush for tickets. The

Freeman's Journal reported that the match tickets were selling fast, particularly 'the two shilling ones'.

By the time the two teams appeared on the pitch the crowd were in a state of great excitement. Respectful cheers were offered up for the visitors, but the loudest applause and encouragement came for the men wearing the shamrock. As the band of the Royal Irish Constabulary left the arena the Irish captain, Sam Lee, won the toss and kicked off towards the railway end. Within minutes it became clear that this encounter would be very different from the last scoreless game against Scotland.

George McAllan was at the heart of the match, and such was the quality of his tackling and kicking that he gave the impression he was a veteran international rather than a novice. Although the match was much better than the previous game, both teams were unable to break the deadlock, and by half-time, much to the frustration of the crowd, both teams remained pointless.

In the second half it was all change, and Ireland at last got some points on the board. Wales came back into the game, but George McAllan and his teammates finally won by 8 points to 4. It meant that Ireland were championship winners for the second time in two years, and it marked a remarkable period in George McAllan's young life. He was singled out for his performance against Wales by one newspaper reporter, who wrote that:

> No praise can be too great for McAllan who quite justified all the great things that had been said about him. [His performance was] far and away better than seen from him on any previous occasion in Dublin.

Ireland's strong display impressed representatives from the other three nations, and one official from the Welsh Rugby Union described the encounter in Dublin as 'one of the finest international matches' he had ever seen.

1896 was an important year for George McAllan, since it not only

marked his international debut but it was the year he left school. From Dungannon he moved to become a teacher at the Cavan Royal School, and he then settled in London. He continued to play rugby, but was never called up to the international team. During his time in the English city he turned out for London Irish, who were set up in 1898 so Irish players could get a game in England.

Life in the capital was short lived for the young Ulsterman, and he returned home to Belfast to join the Imperial Yeomanry when the Boer War began. In South Africa during active service he was wounded in Johannesburg in 1901, but made a full recovery. He enjoyed his new experiences in Africa, and after he met a local woman, Catherine Hogate, they got married and the couple settled down to a new life together.

Over the next few years when he was out of uniform McAllan held down jobs in a hospital and a mining company. The outbreak of the Great War changed everything, and in 1914, perhaps motivated by his experience of the Boer War, the young Dungannon man decided to volunteer for active service. McAllan joined the Royal Flying Corps and he came back to England, where he trained. His overseas postings included some time on active service in German East Africa.

It was whilst flying that McAllan was involved in a crash that would have devastating repercussions. Little is known of the precise details of the accident except that he was very badly injured and decided to leave the Flying Corps and transfer to the South African Medical Corps, where he became a lieutenant and a quartermaster. Back in South Africa it was clear that the crash had seriously changed his life, and he found it difficult to recover from his injuries. He was admitted to the Roberts Heights Hospital in Pretoria as he continued to struggle with his injuries. On 4 December 1918 he died, and he was buried at the Thaba Tshwane Cemetery in the Gauteng province in South Africa.

George McAllan was just forty years of age when he died, and in that time he packed much into his life. Like Robert Balderston Burgess and Albert Lewis Stewart he played rugby for his club and

his country with a style that won him many admirers. He was both a fine sportsman and a highly regarded soldier, who like so many of his generation died in battle. His place in the story of Irish rugby is often overlooked, yet he is part of the early narrative of the game – the talented full back who became the first schoolboy to play for Ireland.

12 Goals and Gunfire

'He deserved every credit for the goals he scored.'

– The *Glasgow Herald* on Harold Sloan, Irish footballer, 1906.

Lodged for safe keeping in the National Screen and Sound Archive in Aberystwyth is a grainy black-and-white film that gives a remarkable glimpse into the world of sport from over a century ago. The three-minute silent recording taken in 1906 features footballers from Wales and Ireland, and is the earliest surviving footage of an international match anywhere in the world. It captures a tense yet lovely occasion as young men do battle on a remote pitch surrounded by trees with the excited crowd in some places standing ten deep behind ropes and whitewashed barriers. As the spectators push and jostle to get a better view of the game, at times it looks like they might spill onto the pitch and interrupt play. Close to each goal net, young boys in short trousers sit on the grass with their feet on

the touchline. Along the sides of the pitch, hundreds of dark-suited men are sandwiched together, craning their necks to see more of the action.

In a rural setting, with no grandstand or covered terracing, the occasion looks like a club match rather than an international sporting occasion. The two teams are smartly attired and, as was the tradition at the time, each player is wearing long, baggy shorts and large boots, which by today's standards look heavy and cumbersome.

By the changing pavilion, alongside the playing area, dozens of people look squeezed on wooden benches, and some can be seen clutching their cigarettes and pipes. Every vantage point inside Wrexham's Racecourse Ground was taken, all eyes on the dry and bumpy turf, which looked like it had been freshly cut and marked with lime.

The game was played in pleasant conditions and was chronicled using two cameras by the pioneering film company Mitchell and Kenyon, who were based in Blackburn and spent their days recording newsworthy events in the early twentieth century. Their brief film vividly illustrates how the sport of football captured the public's attention in the early years of the professional game, and the recording portrays a world far removed from today's English Premier League.

The two sets of players were not strangers, having played against each other in previous Home Internationals, and over the years Wales had the better record. In 1905, the encounter had ended as a 2–2 draw, so the crowd who travelled to the game may have had hopes for a high-scoring match.

Five thousand people turned up that April afternoon, and for an hour and a half they watched as the Irish forward Harold Sloan skilfully beat the Welsh goalkeeper three times. On each occasion the Dubliner easily found the net in a goal spree that began ten minutes in.

In response, the Welsh strikers kept the Irish goalkeeper, Fred McKee, busy, and there was no shortage of goalmouth incidents.

The short recording shows the players leaving the field at half-

time, and opposing team members can be seen chatting as they walk off towards the dressing rooms. With Wales leading 3–2 there would have been much for each coach to discuss with his players.

When the full-time whistle sounded, nothing separated the teams. Sloan's accuracy in front of the goal spared Ireland's blushes, and he helped his country to secure a vital away point. The game in Wrexham ended as a thrilling 4–4 draw, and it was a memorable encounter for all kinds of reasons. There were great goals, injuries and dramatic tackles, and even the match ball had to be replaced after it burst just before half-time.

It was a game of impressive cameos, with Harold Sloan netting three goals for Ireland and Albert Green doing the same for the home side. Eight goals in an international match provided much for the crowd to ponder, and the two hat-tricks just added to the entertainment.

For twenty-three-year-old Sloan, the game in Wales marked his fourth in an Irish shirt, and it was without question his finest performance. His skill kept his fellow countrymen in a match that was dominated by a series of defensive errors. Those who witnessed it, like the *Glasgow Herald*'s correspondent, said he 'deserved every credit for the goals he scored'.

If Sloan enjoyed reading the newspaper reports, his teammate Fred McKee probably didn't. The twenty-two-year-old goalkeeper, who played in Belfast for Cliftonville, was blamed for a number of the goals Wales scored, and one newspaper said he 'appeared weak'.

When the final whistle was blown, it brought to an end a miserable British Home Championship for Ireland, which saw them at the bottom of table. In the Four Nations Tournament they managed only one draw after being thumped conclusively 5–0 by England at Cliftonville's Solitude ground in Belfast, and then losing narrowly to Scotland 1–0 in Dublin.

Sloan's sharp shooting did not go unnoticed or unrewarded, and a year later he was offered the captain's armband. In the new era of professionalism many of his opponents made their living from the game playing full-time for clubs in England, but Sloan was different.

An amateur international player, he worked for the Civil Service and took to the pitch without payment as a 'gentleman player'.

At the beginning of the twentieth century he was one of the most skilful players in the Bohemians team, and one of the most talented to play for Ireland. A decade after he mesmerised the crowd in Wales, Harold Sloan signed up to fight in the Great War and died in France as a member of the Royal Garrison Artillery. Others who played that day would also die during the hostilities, including Welsh goalkeeper Leigh Roose, whom Sloan got the better of for most of that afternoon in Wrexham.

Roose was a colourful character and a crowd pleaser who would often tell jokes to spectators during games. He was a very talented player and was described by Billy Meredith, his Welsh teammate, as 'The Prince of Goalkeepers'. He courted controversy with his views on the game, which made good copy for journalists, and as a result he had a difficult relationship with those in officialdom who ran the game.

He would often carry the ball outside the penalty area, which eventually forced the Football Association to change the law, preventing goalkeepers from doing so. Roose, who would keep goal for a number of teams including Stoke City and Everton, died in the Somme region of France in October 1916. Between 1906 and 1908, Roose's path and Sloan's would cross on a number of occasions.

Sloan's club, Bohemians, were one of the founding fathers of Irish football, and were the first Dublin-based team to join the Belfast-dominated Irish Football League.

Founded in 1890 in the Gate Lodge alongside the North Circular Road, the team began life after students from Dublin came together and began playing at Phoenix Park. In the early days the club moved grounds regularly, and it was only in 1901 that they found a permanent home at Dalymount Park in the Phibsborough area of Dublin.

The Bohemians' ground was officially opened by the city's Lord Mayor, Tim Harrington, and he looked on as Bohemians played an exhibition game against their Dublin rivals, Shelbourne.

Five thousand spectators turned up for the occasion to watch the home side triumph 4–2, and Harold Sloan earned the distinction of being the first player to score in the new ground.

The game in September 1901 marked an important milestone for the club, but also for Sloan, who at age nineteen was beginning to establish a reputation as a fine footballer. He was a civil servant, and it is likely that he became interested in football through his work or as a result of friendships at college.

Harold Alexander De Barbizon Sloan was born on 25 August 1882 to Mary and Gilbert Sloan, who lived at Dunsinea in Castleknock in County Dublin. His parents were middle class, and his father worked as a manager of a Dublin candle factory. Harold had two older brothers, Gilbert and Stanley, and one younger brother, Norman Ernest, who was born in 1884. The Sloans were comfortable and provided accommodation in their Victorian home for their maid, Mary Anne Cowley.

A Presbyterian, Harold attended the High School in Dublin's Harcourt Street, where he studied English, maths and the classics, and it appears that he was a competent student. In 1898 he won a series of prizes for his schoolwork, and he was particularly good at English.

Away from his studies, football began to dominate much of his spare time. At the turn of the century the teenager found himself in demand as a talented striker. He began playing for Bohemians, and in a series of early games quickly established a reputation as a quick-thinking forward.

One such occasion was on a fine afternoon in March 1900, when he and his teammates travelled to Castleknock to play the students from St Vincent's College. Sloan was quickly on the scoresheet, and he scored twice in a 3–2 victory.

Days later, Sloan and his teammates travelled to Clongowes College, and in perfect conditions tried to repeat their Castleknock performance, though this time they were handsomely beaten. Much to the visitors' surprise, Clongowes put six past the luckless Bohemians goalkeeper, and Harold Sloan got his side's solitary goal.

By late 1901 the reputation of the club went beyond Irish shores. With the new ground in place, officials at Dalymount Park invited leading sides Preston North End and Glasgow Celtic to compete in friendlies, which were well attended. Sloan enjoyed these occasions and got on the scoresheet during the visit of Preston North End, which ended not surprisingly in an eight goals to two victory for the visitors.

By 1903 the young Dubliner was now a regular in the side, and was turning in crowd-pleasing performances that captured the attention of the press and international selectors.

In February Harold Sloan received his first call-up to the Ireland team for the match against England at the Molineux Grounds in Wolverhampton.He was selected after another striker, Tommy Shanks, was unable to make the trip to the English Midlands.

Sloan was the only Dublin-based player to be chosen for the England game, and the majority of those selected came from Belfast-based clubs like Linfield and Distillery. Geography and logistics meant that he had his own particular travel arrangements to the game. Whilst his teammates made a boat journey from Belfast to Liverpool and then onto Wolverhampton, he went to Britain through the Welsh port of Holyhead.

England were the favourites and fielded top players from the big clubs like Tottenham Hotspur, Everton and West Bromwich Albion. Around 12,000 spectators journeyed to the ground, and the special entry fee of a sixpence generated gate receipts of nearly £600.

Despite the home advantage, it was the Irish who dominated the early stages. In fine weather, with the wind at their backs, Ireland had a number of chances, and Harold Sloan had a shot well saved. As the game wore on, however, England slowly got the upper hand and went in at half-time with a 1–0 lead.

In the second half, England dominated proceedings and scored three more goals without reply to win by four goals to nil. It was an unsuccessful debut for Sloan, but it did not deter the selectors from picking him again, and he wore the international colours on seven more occasions.

A month after his Irish debut he starred for Bohemians in the Irish Cup Final against Belfast side Distillery. The Belfast side proved too strong for the Dubliners, and after a 3–1 victory they took the trophy back north.

Over the next five seasons Harold Sloan's career blossomed on the domestic and international front, and he continued to score goals and create headlines. In March 1904 Sloan made his first appearance in Dublin in an Irish shirt in a game against Scotland as part of the British Home Championship. The match ended in a 1–1 draw, but it was not the end of his representative games that year as in October he was selected to be part of an Irish League team that played an English eleven, losing 2–0.

The game in Belfast attracted quite a crowd, and at one stage a number of spectators broke through the touchline barriers, which prompted the Scottish referee, Tom Robertson, to stop the game for a period of time.

Sloan's lack of luck against England continued into the 1905 season, and in a game in Middlesbrough in February the two sides cancelled each other out in a 1–1 draw.

In February 1907 Sloan again tried to outfox England, and this time he led Ireland out as captain at Goodison Park in Liverpool. An estimated 25,000 spectators, including numerous Irish exiles, came through the turnstiles to watch, with those in the stands paying a shilling for the privilege. In those days Ireland did not play in green, a colour now associated with the team, and as Sloan and his teammates ran out onto the turf they sported royal blue shirts with shamrock crests.

The game began well for Harold Sloan's men, and Ireland looked 'very dangerous' in the early stages. At half-time the Bohemians' striker may have been pleased with his team's performance as they went into the break drawing 0–0.

In the second half England applied huge pressure to the Irish goalkeeper, and the home side secured a series of free kicks. The fourth led to Hardman, the Everton winger, scoring the game's only goal.

A week later, Harold Sloan and his teammates tried to put the narrow English defeat behind them when they hosted Wales at Solitude in Belfast. For Sloan it was an opportunity to be reacquainted with Leigh Roose, the Welsh goalkeeper, against whom a year earlier he had scored three times in the dramatic 4–4 draw in Wrexham.

The Welsh side had no shortage of quality players, and their line-up included Billy Meredith of Manchester United, who was dubbed the 'Welsh Wizard'. Meredith had been missing from the previous encounter and seemed determined to make his presence felt in Belfast. In front of 8,000 spectators he lived up to his nickname and displayed numerous clever touches.

Despite the wintry conditions and a sandy pitch, both teams turned the occasion into an entertaining encounter, and in the opening minutes Roose pulled off a dramatic one-handed save. At half-time the scores were level at 1–1, and in the second half Meredith scored a rare international goal to give Wales the lead. Much to the delight of the crowd, Sloan equalised, but the joy for the home supporters was short-lived as W. 'Lot' Jones, the Manchester City player, scored the Welsh winner to give the visitors a 3–2 victory. Jones would later join the 'Sportsmen Battalion' and would survive the Great War.

Harold Sloan got an opportunity to avenge the defeat a year later in his final appearance against Wales in April 1908 in Aberdare. After days of heavy rain the pitch was regarded as 'treacherous', but the conditions did not hamper play and both sides had good chances in the first half. Harold Sloan got his opportunity, and he continued his good record of scoring against Wales by breaking the deadlock to give Ireland a lead at the interval. In the second half Wales came back strongly, and Meredith had a number of chances, but he couldn't beat Scott, the Irish keeper. Sloan's men held on, and at full-time his goal separated the teams to secure a much needed 1–0 victory.

The 1908 season ended on good terms for Harold Sloan, both on the international front with Ireland and in Dublin with Bohemians.

In March of that year, 8,000 spectators crammed into Dalymount

Park to watch Bohemians take on Shelbourne, which was the first ever Irish Cup Final between two sides from Dublin. Ever the history-maker, Harold Sloan lived up to his goal-scoring reputation, and in the first half put Bohemians ahead. For the next forty-five minutes it looked like Sloan's goal would decide the game, until Shelbourne sneaked an equaliser just ten minutes before full-time, forcing a replay.

The second game was a completely different affair to the first, and was dominated by Bohemians. Harold Sloan had a hand in the first goal when his shot hit the bar and Dick Hooper scored from the rebound. Hooper added a second, and then his younger brother, William, made it 3–0. By half-time it seemed that the game was over. In the second half Shelbourne pulled a goal back, but then after some strong tackling several Bohemians players got injured and proceedings were delayed.

As the English referee blew his whistle for full-time, a Harold Sloan shot flew past the Shelbourne goalkeeper and into the net, but it did not count, nor did it really matter as the game was won. Amidst great scenes of joy Bohemians lifted the Irish Cup after their star player had performed a leading role.

A year later, Bohemians, with Harold Sloan as club captain, found themselves back in the Irish Cup Final, this time against Cliftonville.

Like in the 1908 final, the first game ended in a draw, so it went to a replay, but there was to be no happy ending for Sloan's team as the men from north Belfast triumphed 3–1. It would be the last time Harold Sloan would appear in an Irish Cup Final.

The 1908/9 season also brought an end to his international career, and in his final appearance in March he was part of the Irish team that were thumped 5–0 away to Scotland.

Harold Sloan's life changed in September 1911 when he married Mabel Fitzgerald Jones, and he and his new bride moved to a new home in Blackrock in County Dublin. His marriage and the move to Blackrock spelt the end of his time at Dalymount Park, which had seen him serve twelve seasons with the club and secure eight international caps for Ireland. In the years that followed, life took

him in a new direction, and in 1913 his son, also called Harold, was born.

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, Harold Sloan senior did not instantly step forward to join the thousands of other Irishmen who volunteered.

He waited until 1915, and then applied through the Officer Training Corps of the Inns of Court in London, and said that he was interested in a 'Temporary Commission'. He was aged thirty-three, was five feet nine and weighed just under ten stone, and after a physical examination was 'considered fit'. The Reverend James Snowdon, a Presbyterian Minister from Blackrock, who may well have been Sloan's own minister, testified to his good character, and in January 1916 on his attestation papers, Harold Sloan said he would join up 'for period of the war only'.

In August 1916 he was finally accepted into Cadet School, and was initially commissioned into the Royal Garrison Artillery. In November 1916 he joined the 198th Siege Battery in Bristol, who went out to the Western Front later that month. He was transferred to a Heavy Artillery Group in December, and served as a 2nd lieutenant based at Combles.

On 22 January 1917 Harold Sloan was killed in action, and two days later a telegram was despatched to the family home in Dublin informing his relatives that he had died. A month later Mabel Sloan was contacted by the War Office in London, which informed her that her husband's grave was marked by a 'durable wooden cross'.

Harold Sloan was thirty-four years old when he died, and the precise circumstances of his death remain unknown. There are no details in his army file at the National Archives in Kew, and there are no reports or statements from his comrades or eyewitnesses. His military career was short-lived, and his reasons for enlisting are not known. He left behind a wife and a young son, Harold Fitzgerald Sloan. He would later become a surgeon lieutenant with the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve during the Second World War, and he served on HMS *Javelin*. He was killed in a German attack in November 1940.

Harold Sloan is a forgotten figure from the history of Irish

football. His name is rarely mentioned, and his contribution to the sport has been overlooked. He was a 'gentleman player' whose talents helped Bohemians to become a major force in the game in the early part of the twentieth century. On the international stage he played with courage and style, and he was one of the stars of the Irish team. A natural goal scorer, he won many games single-handed and changed matches with his ability to find the net. Of all the goals he scored, he is probably best remembered as the first man to score at the new ground of Dalymount Park. His hat-trick against Wales was another career highlight. He was a man of his era; an amateur footballer who played for the love of the game rather than any financial reward.

In another Irish city the footballing public had their own local hero, who, like Sloan, had a reputation for skilful play and a knack of scoring goals in important games. It began in 1900 when Barney Donaghey, a raw seventeen-year-old was signed by Derry Celtic, and instantly made an impact on the football scene.

He would go on to play for Manchester United, Hibernian, Burnley, and a host of Irish clubs, and he made one appearance for the Irish international team in 1902. Standing at five feet four inches in his boots, and weighing just ten stone, he was a slight character, but he was a tricky player who opponents found hard to tackle.

Born at Walker's Place in the city on 23 December 1882 to Edward and Bridget Donaghey, he was initially called Bernard, but for most of his life was known as Barney. If his first name was interchangeable, so too was his surname, and throughout his career he was referred to mainly as Donaghey, but sometimes he was called Donaghy.

His debut for Derry Celtic in September 1900 went well, and in front of a sizeable home crowd against Cliftonville he quickly became a fans' favourite. In the first half Derry took their chances well and Donaghey managed to score two good goals. The *News Letter*'s correspondent wrote rather lyrically:

> Nothing succeeds like success, and a soft deceitful shot often beats a sharp custodian. This was the case

> when Donaghey rolled up one that somehow got into the net.

At half-time, Barney Donaghey's well-taken goals made the difference, and Derry Celtic lead the visitors 3–2.

In the second half Cliftonville came back, and scored their equalizer from a penalty. The game finished 3–3, and it was a very impressive debut from Donaghey. The Celts, as they were known by supporters and by the press, struggled in the opening games of the season. By October, after the first seven games they had lost six and drawn one. It was clear, however, that Barney Donaghey was one of the stars of the team, and one of the most talented players in the Irish League.A bustling forward, he was capable of playing at inside-right or inside-left, and had a very strong shot.

In February 1902 he was selected for an Irish League eleven against a Scottish League team at Dens Park in Dundee. The weather was favourable, and in front of some 11,000 spectators, on a pitch heavily covered in sand, Donaghey made his representative debut.

Wearing green shirts with a shamrock emblem and white shorts, the Irish team battled hard and Donaghey struggled a little on the difficult surface. Over the ninety minutes the Irish boys were no match for their hosts, and the Scottish select ran out comfortably as 3–0 winners.

Donaghey returned to Derry, and a few weeks later he was on the move. In April 1902 he was signed by the Ulster club, and he scored on his debut, just as he had done some two years earlier on his first game for Derry Celtic.

His stay with Ulster was brief, and he then began playing for the leading side Belfast Celtic, which had a reputation for adventurous, free-flowing football. In August 1902, much to the delight of his new teammates, he repeated his old trick of scoring on his debut. It proved to be an exciting month for the nineteen-year-old Derry man as he was selected to play for Ireland, making his international debut in Belfast against Scotland.

The game at the Balmoral Grounds was the biggest match of

Donaghey's career, and some of the finest players from Scotland and Ireland were on show, though the game failed to capture the public's attention and it attracted a very poor crowd. One reason for the low attendance was the fact that it was Coronation Day, and there were plenty of other distractions for a Saturday afternoon.

In fine weather, the friendly game was played in a good spirit, and before kick-off it had been decided that the gate receipts would go to the Ibrox Park disaster fund.

Scotland had the best of the early pressure, and Donaghey and the other Irish players found it difficult to make any impact. At half-time Scotland had a 2–0 lead, which was well deserved, and Ireland were fortunate not to be further behind.

The second half continued in the same vein, and the game took on the air of an exhibition match with both sides playing as if it was a pre-season training game. The Scots were the better team and always looked superior to Ireland, and before the full-time whistle scored a third goal to put the game well beyond the reach of their hosts. Donaghey did not do enough to impress the watching selection committee, and his appearance in Irish colours that August afternoon would be his last.

In the early part of his career Donaghey became a well-travelled player, and after his spell at Belfast Celtic he moved across the city to play for Glentoran. Like his time at Celtic Park, his stay at east Belfast would be short-lived.

It is hard to know why he moved clubs with such regularity. It is possible that there were disciplinary problems and clashes of personality. Donaghey was opinionated and quick tempered; match reports suggest that he occasionally questioned the decisions of officials during games, and the records also show that he was often spoken to by referees. Another reason for his regular moves could be that he was ambitious and was anxious to move on quickly and make a career in the game.

After a number of months at Glentoran he attracted the attention of the Scottish side Hibernian, and he began plying his trade in Scotland. Predictably, his stay in Edinburgh was not a long one, and

at the start of the 1905/6 season he was back home playing for Derry Celtic.

The reasons for his departure from Hibernian are not known, but what is clear is that his return to Irish football was welcomed in Derry, and he was again chosen to represent the league in a representative match in October 1905. In the Irish league team, Donaghey lined out alongside players from Linfield, Glentoran, Shelbourne, Cliftonville and Distillery. The English eleven included experienced players from the top clubs of Blackburn Rovers, Manchester City, Everton and Aston Villa.

The game before a crowd of around 13,000 spectators at Manchester City's ground at Hyde Road was a very tight affair in the first half, and both sides appeared quite evenly matched. Barney Donaghey looked lively around the English goal and had a number of chances, but could not convert any of them. He should have scored at one stage and 'failed at an open goal', and on another occasion tested the English goalkeeper with a strong shot. He looked like the Irish player most likely to score, but at half-time it was the English select team that led by 1–0.

In the second half Donaghey and his teammates tried hard to find an equaliser, but their efforts went unrewarded. The English players pressurised the Irish goal, and soon scored a second, and then a third. In the last minute, despite strong Irish defending, the home side secured another goal, to make the final score 4–0. The result appeared to flatter the English team, and the Irish boys were unfortunate not to have got on the scoresheet. Although Barney Donaghey was on the losing side, his presence and skill impressed officials from Manchester United who were in the crowd.

Mr J.J. Bentley from the club felt that Donaghey had the potential to become a Manchester United player, so he travelled to Ireland to meet him and discuss terms. This marked the biggest move of his life, and Donaghey was not going to refuse the opportunity to play professional football in England.

United's interest in Donaghey and Bentley's trip to Ireland was

not a secret, and was reported in the newspapers. Although he was now playing in Derry, Donaghey's former club, Hibernian, needed to be compensated before the move could take place, so Bentley travelled to Scotland to complete the deal. Hibernian accepted a figure of around £100, and by the final week of October Barney Donaghey was a Manchester United player.

He left Derry on 30 October and travelled to Manchester, and his arrival at the club sparked much interest in the press. His first appearance at the training ground on 2 November even merited some column inches in the local paper.

The new signing went straight into the United first team for the division two game against Lincoln City, played at their home ground in the Clayton area of Manchester. In front of 12,000 spectators, Donaghey did not live up to his reputation of scoring on his debut, and despite his best efforts he failed to get on the scoresheet. Instead, the recently signed Scottish striker, Jack Picken, did, and another goal from halfback Charlie Roberts gave United a 2–1 victory.

Donaghey was selected for the away match against Chesterfield a week later, and again failed to find the net. United had most of the possession in the first half, but simply could not turn chances into goals. Chesterfield were much improved in the second half, and won the game by a single goal.

As Donaghey and his teammates battled for promotion to Division One, the away defeat to a club well down the league table was seen as a terrible setback, and the press were very critical of United's forward line. One journalist in a Manchester newspaper wrote of the team that 'the defence is all right ...but there is something radically wrong with the attack'. The journalist then singled out the new signing for particular comment:

> Donaghey has yet to prove that he is the man likely to affect an improvement in this direction, though he and Picken combined cleverly on Saturday. [...] forceful forwards with strong and accurate shooting ability are what are wanted if United are to gain

admission to the upper circle.

The journalists were clearly articulating what some staff at the training ground were thinking, although, to be fair, club officials hardly needed any reminding that their much heralded new striker was showing little sign of putting the ball in the net.

There was lots of competition for a place in the United forward line, and Donaghey soon found himself far down the pecking order. United had an array of talent to choose from that included the Scottish striker Jack Peddie, a talented dribbler of the ball who was a regular goal scorer. Peddie's fellow Scot, Jack Picken, also had the knack of finding the net, and as United pushed for promotion he became a team regular. Harry Williams, who was signed from Burnley, was another player whose form was impressive, and along with Picken and Peddie he became a first choice in the starting eleven. It meant that there was no place in the team for the new signing from Derry.

By the end of November 1905, less than a month after he arrived with high expectations, Barney Donaghey was a reserve team player for Manchester United.

Over the next six months the first team continued to win games and started to look like strong promotion contenders for Division One. With the attention of the press focussed on the first team, Barney Donaghey slipped away from public view as he plied his footballing trade in a series of reserve matches.

In April 1906, as the season came to a close, he was given another chance to show off his skills in the first team in an away game at Lincoln City. The match, in front of a crowd of around 3,000 spectators, was a tight affair, and little is known of how Donaghey played in the game as he does not feature prominently in any of the match reports. He did not get on the scoresheet, but two goals from Jack Allan and one from the talented outside-left George Wall gave United an important 3–2 victory.

By the end of the 1905/6 season, Manchester United secured promotion to Division One after an absence of twelve years. In the

pre-season the club had invested heavily in players, and with the team back in the top flight it looked like the management's spending plans had paid off. The joy of promotion meant little to Barney Donaghey. He had featured in only three of the first team's games that season, and was told by club officials that after nine months largely in the reserves he did not have a part in the club's future. Donaghey and two other players were released in the close season, and in July 1906 he was transferred back to his old club, Derry Celtic, in time for the new season.

Donaghey came home to the familiar surroundings of Derry to resume his career in the grounds across Ireland, and began to play against teams he knew well.

He was twenty-three years old, very experienced, and with an international cap to his credit, and clearly felt that he deserved another chance to show off his talents in England. After a season back in Ireland his chance for top-flight football came again, and he caught the attention of officials from Burnley. The management at the Lancashire club remembered him from his Manchester United days and were impressed with the Derryman's ability. Staff from Burnley came to Donaghey's home town to watch him play and then offered him a contract, which he duly signed. Donaghey travelled to England, and in the autumn of 1907 he began training at Burnley's Turf Moor ground.

Life away from home may have been made easier by the fact that Donaghey knew a number of the Burnley players, including Clem Beddow, with whom he had played with during his time in Manchester. As with his early days in the red shirt of Manchester United, much was expected from Donaghey in Burnley's colours, and the fact that he was an Irish international meant that supporters were anticipating something special.

He began playing for the reserves, and the early signs were promising as he found himself on the scoresheet and began to grab the attention of the press. In September 1907, however, he made headlines for the wrong reasons, and his future at Burnley was called into question. His form dipped, and he began to get involved in

arguments at the club.

The committee that handled team matters at Burnley decided to take action, and made journalists aware that the new signing from Ireland was causing problems. On 26 September 1907 the *Lancashire Evening Post* examined the performance of a number of Burnley players, and reported that Donaghey's form:

> ... has been less satisfactory. [...] he has not shown a glimpse of his old form and the training he has undergone at Burnley does not seem to have benefited him much.

The article went on to state that the Burnley committee had decided to suspend him 'for insubordination'. The details of Donaghey's offences were never made public, but it seems that he clashed verbally with staff at the club and within a short time it became clear that the Derryman was on borrowed time.

It appears that Donaghey's time at Turf Moor was not a happy one, and in 1908 his disciplinary problems returned. He was reported for misconduct during a game at Lancaster, and later he was cautioned for his behaviour by members of the Lancashire Football Association. He continued to play for Burnley reserves, and occasionally got on the scoresheet, but the club had more able and more proficient strikers, so his opportunities for first-team football were limited. It became clear that Donaghey did not have a future with the Lancashire club, and team officials concluded that he was not good enough to play in the higher echelons of English football.

In the entire season he managed just five second division games for the club. Donaghey then did what he had done after Manchester United released him: he returned to Ireland and resumed his career with Derry Celtic, which marked his third and final spell with the team from his home town. Life back in Derry had a familiarity about it, and Donaghey settled back into being a big star in the local Irish football scene.

For nearly six years he wore the colours of Derry Celtic, and just

as before he became a crowd favourite. In 1914 he decided to leave Derry when he was offered a role with Dumbarton Harp, a team based in the west of Scotland. Like Glasgow Celtic, Dumbarton Harp were formed by Irish Catholic immigrants in the 1890s, and they played in green-and-white hooped shirts. He made his debut in February 1914, and turned out for his new side in a reserve game against the second eleven from Clyde.

Now in his early thirties, Donaghey's footballing career was in its final months, and his time with Dumbarton Harp was limited.

When the war broke out, like many other Irishmen he volunteered for military service and joined the 1st Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. In January 1915 his battalion came under the command of the 29th Division, and were based in Rugby.

In March, he and his comrades sailed to Egypt and then on to Gallipoli, where they took part in the landings at Cape Helles, in which many thousands of Irish soldiers perished. In January 1916 the battalion were evacuated from Gallipoli, and Donaghey, who had lost many comrades, was taken to hospital after being injured in the head by shrapnel. He was very lucky to survive, and was taken to a hospital in Tanta in Egypt. As he recovered he wrote home to Derry, describing his experiences. He recounted how he had witnessed a number of his comrades losing their lives: 'the other four soldiers that were beside me were killed. It was an awful sight. I am sure it was the prayers that saved me'.

From Gallipoli, the men from the Inniskillings 1st Battalion were transferred to France in March 1916, where they joined thousands of other Irishmen as they prepared for the Somme offensive.

On 1 July 1916 Donaghey was with his comrades from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. The 1st Battalion were part of the 29th Division, and their objective was to capture Y Ravine. It would prove to be the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army, and the word 'Somme' would become synonymous with slaughter. 21,000 British soldiers died or were mortally wounded that day, and the Irish regiments paid a very heavy price.

Barney Donaghey died on that July Saturday in the mud and confusion of the Somme.

Days later, word would reach his wife, Sarah, back in Derry, that he was 'Missing in Action', presumed killed. Barney Donaghey's body was never recovered. His name is recorded on the Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval in France, and he is also commemorated on the Diamond War Memorial in his home city of Derry. He was a character on and off the pitch, and entertained spectators and infuriated club officials in equal measure. Sometimes the most talented of players are the hardest to control, and Barney Donaghey fits into that category.

Opinionated, forceful, a natural footballer, Donaghey was the kind of person you would rather be playing with than competing against. He was very different in style and temperament to his Bohemians counterpart, Harold Sloan. The modest Dubliner personified the era of the 'gentleman amateur', whereas Donaghey was part of the new breed of players anxious to make a living out of the sport. Despite their differences, they are part of the same narrative. They were sporting idols who helped to transform the game, but who in later years became the forgotten heroes of Irish football.

13 The Medicine Men

'He was the most gallant fellow I have ever met.'
– Tribute to Ernest Deane, Irish rugby international, 1915.

On a spring morning in 1903, the captain of RMS *Briton* slowly eased his craft from the quayside and pushed out into the waters of the Solent. From the deck his passengers got a bird's-eye view across the port of Southampton, and in the distance they could see the Isle of Wight. On board the Belfast-built steamship, most of the travellers were settling down to enjoy the long journey in second and third class. Those fortunate and wealthy enough were enjoying a little more comfort in the spacious first-class compartments. For the next six weeks until they rounded the Cape of Good Hope this would be their floating home. As the 500-foot vessel gathered speed it headed for the deep expanse of the English Channel. Soon, the Hampshire coastline started to disappear from sight, and some passengers may have been tempted to take one last glimpse of

England. It was a view that many would not see for another five months.

Walking the decks and the gangways was a large group of well-dressed men. To the casual observer they must have looked like businessmen, doctors, or perhaps teachers going overseas. A quick glimpse of the names on the passenger list would reveal that they were in fact the finest rugby players from the British Isles.

Many in the group bound for South Africa were household names, and the travelling party featured twelve full internationals, including the captains of England, Scotland and Ireland. They were on their way for a twenty-two-game tour as part of a combined British team that would later become better known as the 'British Lions'. For twenty-four-year-old Robbie Smyth, an Ulster-born surgeon who practised in Dublin, the voyage to the Southern Hemisphere was a novel experience. He had never toured with the British team before, and was relatively new to the international scene having made his Irish debut in the Four Nations Championship some three months earlier.

Smyth, who played his rugby in the pack for Dublin University, was one of five Irish players in the twenty-one-strong squad led by Scotsman Mark Morrison. On paper his team of players looked well balanced with some fast backs and sturdy forwards, and the expectation for success was high since in previous visits to South Africa the British players had lost only once.

The tour came at an important time in South African history as the country was coming to terms with life after the divisive Anglo–Boer War, which had lasted for four years. Many of those who would face the British team on the field had recently worn the uniform of the Crown, and a number of British-born players would line out for the home nation.

As Robbie Smyth and his teammates were about to find out, much had changed in this part of Africa both on and off the field. The country and the rugby team were in a period of transition, and any feelings of superiority the British players might have possessed as they left England were about to vanish.

The trip started in Cape Town with a match against Western Province Country, and it was a bad beginning as the visitors were defeated by 13 points to 7. Matters got worse in the days that followed when two more games against Western Province Towns and Western Province also led to defeats for the tourists.

Robbie Smyth was selected for the First Test against South Africa in Johannesburg, and in front of a 5,000-strong crowd the British players performed well in a 10–10 draw. Ten days later the two teams did battle again, this time at the Athletic Ground in Kimberley, and just like in their previous encounter there was nothing to separate them as they fought a scoreless draw.

The two draws meant that the final game in Cape Town on 12 September became the test decider. Robbie Smyth was selected for the match at Newlands Stadium, and whilst he and his fellow forwards worked hard they were no match for the inventive South Africans, who won 8–0.

The test match brought to a close the tour that had seen the visitors travel across all parts of South Africa and play twenty-two games, winning eleven, losing eight and drawing three. It was the worst series of results a touring British Isles team had ever recorded in South Africa.

Naturally, the British press were not impressed with the statistics of the tour, or the team's general performance. The *Edinburgh Evening News* was typical, commenting that the figures did not make 'pleasant reading' and remarking that in 1891 the touring side had won all of their nineteen games and in 1896 they had lost only once. Understandably, the South Africans viewed the tour very differently, and the manner of their final victory in Cape Town delighted players, officials and supporters.

When the British team sailed back into Southampton on board the RMS *Kinfauns Castle*, they were tired and delighted to see their families again after an absence of four months.

By the autumn of 1903 the power axis of international rugby had changed, and it was clear for the South Africans that the matches against the British marked a coming of age. The men from Cape

Town and Johannesburg were now capable of taking on any team across the world, and the 1903 matches laid the foundations for a historic return visit by the 'Springboks' to Britain in 1906.

For Robbie Smyth, the South African experience was a positive one. He played alongside some of the game's finest players, and had been selected for all three of the test matches. The tour, although long and at times disappointing, still marked the highlight of a year that had begun with a successful international debut against England at Lansdowne Road.

On that day in Dublin, Smyth was one of four new Irish caps selected for the game in February 1903. The decision by selectors to shake things up a bit did not immediately win universal praise. One writer suggested that 'the team all round is a fairly good one, without being brilliant in any department'. The match was not a classic, and was described very starkly by one correspondent as 'a very disappointing affair'. The game was marred by a series of mistakes, and there was little to enthuse the 10,000 spectators, A common comment was that 'Ireland were the better of two bad sides.' Another observer said, 'It was one of the worst international matches we have ever witnessed.' Ireland eventually won by 6 points to nil, but in truth the margin would have been greater had Smyth and his teammates made better use of the ball.

For the debutant Smyth, the game heralded a successful start to his international career, and two weeks later he was chosen for the match against Scotland in Edinburgh. The away game at Inverleith was like the match in Dublin, and was a very tight affair dominated by much forward play. It produced only a handful of points, with Scotland winning 3–0. The Scots would go on to win the Four Nations Championship, with England picking up the 'wooden spoon'.

Robbie Smyth's international career would continue into 1904, and in February of that year he was selected for the game against England at the Rectory Field in Blackheath. The hosts clearly wanted to forget the miserable season they had just endured, and Ireland were well beaten in a 19–0 victory.

Travelling to rugby matches and playing the game were taking up much of Smyth's spare time. He was working as a surgeon and was on the staff at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital at Grand Canal Street in Dublin. The imposing granite building operated both as a hospital and a school for physicians, and Smyth went there after he studied medicine at Trinity College. Sport played a crucial role in the lives of many of the hospital staff, and Smyth was one of three internationals who would later die during the Great War.

Born in August 1879 at the family home in Warrenpoint, he was the fourth son of William and Jane Smyth, and was initially educated at Dungannon Royal School. Robbie's brother, Edmund, was also a talented sportsman who represented Ireland at hockey, and the story of his sporting and military career is told elsewhere in this book. Rugby dominated much of Robbie Smyth's early life, and he captained the university team and later appeared for Sir Patrick Dun's, who routinely won the Dublin Hospitals Rugby Cup. After he completed his studies and became a house surgeon he later decided to join the military, and in 1905 he became a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Army life meant an end to his international career, but many other opportunities presented themselves. He was commissioned as a lieutenant, was later despatched to India, and in 1909 was promoted to the rank of captain.

By 1914, now aged thirty-four, he developed some medical problems, and in August he wrote to his superior officers saying that he wanted to resign 'on account of ill health'. An initial Medical Board hearing concluded that he was suffering from 'disordered action of the heart' and suggested that he could have 'cirrhosis of the liver'. The Board also stated that his condition was the result of 'over indulgence in alcohol and recommends his discharge from the service'.

A few days later Robbie Smyth was examined by a doctor, who confirmed that he was suffering from a 'feverish attack'. The GP also stated that 'It did not seem to me that he would be fit for duty for a week or two.'

Robbie's brother, who was also in the army, was equally worried about developments, and he wrote saying that he thought his brother 'was not in a fit state as he was a dipsomaniac [alcoholic] and unable to control himself when alone'. His brother's claims were investigated, but Robbie's superiors found no evidence to support his theory. On 15 August Robbie changed his mind, and he wrote another letter, this time stating that he wanted to cancel his original request to resign his commission. He wrote:

> I have now quite recovered from the indisposition I was suffering. I acted hastily in the matter and did not clearly understand the consequences of my actions.

In September another sitting of the Medical Board concluded that there was 'no evidence in his present condition to corroborate the statement made as to him being a dipsomaniac'. Smyth was deemed fit for active service, instructed to report for duty, and told that he would be travelling to the Royal Army Medical Corps Depot in Aldershot. It seems Smyth now forgot about any idea of leaving the military, and he found himself at the heart of battle.

Over the next eighteen months he saw active service in France, and his courage was Mentioned in Despatches for 'gallant and distinguished service in the field'. His bravery did not go unrewarded, and in December 1915 he was promoted to the rank of major. It seemed his health troubles were long forgotten.

As the Great War continued, with little end in sight, soldiers on the front line faced the triple horrors of bullets, shells and mustard gas. It was the gas that caused Robbie Smyth most difficulties, and the Ulsterman was gassed twice. The first time he was sent back to the UK to recuperate, but it seems that he returned to the front when he was not fully recovered. Back in France he was gassed again, and this time the effects took an enormous toll on his health. He once again came back to London to recuperate, but the damage was fatal, and in February 1916, realising that his military days were over, he resigned his commission.

Smyth may have sensed then that he had not got long to live, and on 5 April, away from the noise and the madness of the battlefield, he died in London. His body was brought back to Ireland, and he was buried at the civic cemetery in Banbridge. In an obituary published in the *Lancet*, one friend wrote:

> His lovable disposition and engaging personality gained him many friends. His death will be deeply regretted by all who knew him, and he will always be held in affectionate remembrance by the friends he made in his all too short life.

Today, Robbie Smyth's life is commemorated on the war memorial in Banbridge, and his name is recorded on a memorial plaque at Trinity College in Dublin and at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. These permanent tributes are a reminder of the appalling human cost of the Great War, and show how young lives like Robbie Smyth's never reached their full potential.

In sporting terms, the Ulsterman achieved much. He was a distinguished rugby player, as his club record and international caps testify, but he was also a member of the rugby elite. As a player for the British Isles team he had experiences that are afforded only to a few.

In Dublin, at the hospital where he worked, on the memorial to the Great War dead his name can be found towards the end of the inscriptions. Close to the top of the commemorative plate are the details of another soldier whose life story echoes that of Smyth.

Even though Arthur Cyril Bateman was eleven years younger than Robbie Smyth, the two men had much in common. They were both medics, members of the Royal Army Medical Corps, old boys from Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital and international sportsmen.

Arthur Cyril Bateman arrived at Dublin University as a medical student in 1909 after his early years at the Royal School in Armagh. For Bateman, sport and the military went hand in hand. As a young student his spare time was spent playing cricket and rugby, and there

were long afternoons and weekends on manoeuvres with the Officer Training Corps. His cricketing skills got him noticed, and he quickly established himself as a talented right-handed batsman with the university team.

By 1913 his impressive batting for the university eleven brought a call-up to the Ireland team, and in July he travelled to Raeburn Place to take on the Gentlemen of Scotland in Edinburgh.

If Bateman was apprehensive about playing at international level, he did not show it. Batting at number five he chalked up a very respectable score of 36 runs. His style pleased the crowd, and one observer described his opening innings as 'lively, free and attractive'.

In his second innings he did not disappoint, and he appeared confident and in control, scoring 52 runs in a game that after three days ended as a draw. Bateman clearly impressed the selectors because in 1914, in the last game before the war broke out, he was selected for a home game against Scotland in Dublin. Warm weather greeted players and spectators at Leinster's cricket ground in Rathmines. As he faced the Scottish bowlers, Bateman was impressive in his first innings. He scored 34 runs and added 27 in his second innings in a sixth-wicket partnership of 91 runs with J. A. Donnelly. It did not last, however, and Donnelly and Bateman were both soon out, with Bateman being caught with a great catch by Paterson.

Scotland triumphed, and despite his heroic batting efforts the arrival of the Great War meant that Arthur Cyril Bateman would never wear Irish cricketing colours again. Instead, he donned the insignia of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and in August 1914 he was commissioned as a lieutenant. In 1915 he was promoted to captain and attached to the 7th Cameron Highlanders as they fought in France.

Bateman was young, but on the front line he often showed a great maturity well beyond his years, and used his medical training to enormous effect. In July 1917, with the battle raging close to the town of Ypres, he worked tirelessly to help many dozens of wounded and

dying comrades. His actions earned him the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry.

In the citation he was praised for repeatedly 'attending to the wounded who had been lying out in some cases for two days'. It added: 'Although continually exposed to hostile sniping and machine gun fire he displayed the utmost disregard of danger.' Eight months later, in March 1918, Arthur Bateman would be dead.

The circumstances of his death and where his body was located would cause much pain to his family for many years. The Bateman family were contacted by the War Office and informed that Arthur was missing and was presumed dead, with death having occurred 'on or since 28-3-18'. Understandably, his relatives were desperately keen to locate his body, and Arthur's father repeatedly wrote to the War Office wanting to know what steps were being taken to try and locate his son's remains.

The War Office initially promised to make inquiries through the Netherlands government, but the family's hopes were dashed when officials wrote back to say that their enquiries had not produced any information. The waiting was agonising for his family, but they did not give up hope that his body could be found. They were then given fresh optimism that he was still alive, and may have been taken captive as a prisoner of war, when they received some information out of the blue.The family got a letter from Captain Eric Lumley of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who was a friend of their son, informing them that he had taken six days' leave to try and find out what had happened to Arthur. Lumley told the Batemans that 'Nobody had even taken records of Allied wounded who went through the Douai and Cambrai hospitals on their way to Germany.' Mr Bateman used this letter from Captain Lumley to suggest to the War Office that his son could be in a German prisoner-of-war camp and might be injured, which would mean that he was unable 'to communicate with us'.

The War Office replied to say there was no evidence to suggest that Arthur Cyril Bateman had ever been at Douai. In October 1918 his father wrote to the War Office saying that he did not 'consider it

necessary to conclude' that his son was dead. A month later the British authorities sent a letter to the German government to try to establish if they had any information surrounding young Bateman's whereabouts.

In January 1919 the Bateman family received a letter from the British Red Cross that brought fresh hope that Arthur could still be alive. The letter contained a witness statement from a soldier called A. Matthews who was with the 45th Royal Army Medical Corps. He was a repatriated prisoner who had come across Arthur Bateman whilst he was being held by the Germans. Matthews said:

> I found Captain Bateman on the cross-roads at Fenchy Chapelle on 28 March and he had been shot through the right lung. We were taken by the Germans to a shelter below Captain Bateman's aid post and stayed the night there. [...] Captain Bateman was very weak.

The statement from Matthews seemed to confirm the Bateman family's theory that Arthur had been captured by the Germans and had been treated by them. The Red Cross told the Batemans that 'enquiries on your behalf are being earnestly pursued'. Sadly for the family, the information supplied by the Red Cross could not be verified, and despite a number of requests the UK authorities could not establish if Arthur Bateman had been taken by the Germans and where his body might be buried.

In March 1919 Mr Bateman senior wrote to the War Office and asked for his son's Military Cross to be sent to him, and he also asked for 'a detailed account of the services for which the distinction was awarded'. A month later, disappointing but not surprising news arrived at the family residence when the War Office told the Bateman family that attempts to trace Arthur's body 'have proved fruitless'.The news was hardly unexpected, but it still came as a blow to the family, who had only recently heard that Reginald, who was their eldest son, had been killed. In the years that followed many letters continued to

go between London and Dublin as the Bateman family were always interested to know if there were any developments in their son's case.In January 1920 the family were informed that for 'official purposes Captain Bateman is dead'.

Peacetime brought greater efforts to trace missing soldiers, and a special organisation was set up to try and find the graves of those who could not be traced during the Great War. Bateman's case was considered, and the 'Special Mission Searching for Missing Soldiers' wrote to the family to say that 'no information can be obtained'.

His body was never found, and he joined the many millions who lost their lives in the Great War but who have no official grave.

The Bateman family decided to keep his memory alive, and they created a rugby tournament that they called the 'Bateman Cup' involving cup winners from the four Irish provinces.

The talented and brave sportsman is remembered in different ways. His name is inscribed on the roll of honour at Trinity College, and like Robbie Smyth he is commemorated at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital.

Bateman's Irish cricketing debut came in 1913, and on that day at Raeburn Place in Edinburgh he lined out alongside another Irishman who would die in the Great War.

George Frederick McNamara managed just one Irish cap against the Gentlemen of Scotland, and like many other young sportsmen, had the circumstances of the time been different, he could have gone on to enjoy a glittering international career.

Like his teammate Bateman, McNamara was a talented sportsman who excelled at many athletic disciplines, including tennis and football. He was one of six children, and his solicitor father, Richard, and his mother, Mary McNamara, could afford to send him to be a boarder at the Oratory school in Birmingham. The school, one of England's leading Catholic educational establishments, was George's home from 1905 until 1911, and it was there, in the English Midlands, that he established himself as a good right-handed batsman and bowler. He played for the school team and was very capable of scoring large numbers of runs, so he often opened the

batting, and was also chosen to begin the bowling.

In 1911, in his final year for the cricket team, he turned in a series of noticeable performances. In a match against King Edward's School from Birmingham he made 118 runs not out, and in a game in Oxford against Beaumont he scored an impressive 108.

McNamara's bowling talent also came into play, and when he opened for the school side he and his teammates eventually defeated Beaumont by eight wickets. His ability was not confined to the cricket pitch, and he became the school's leading scorer for the football team. He was an exceptional striker, and on one occasion scored five goals for the school in a local match against the Birmingham Police team. At this time McNamara's ability with a football attracted more notice than his cricketing skills, and he left the Oratory School and went to study at New College in Oxford, where he was selected for the football team. He became the first boy from his school to be chosen for the team, and in his final year played in a match against their arch rivals from Cambridge University.

McNamara also played cricket for his college, but there is no official record of him being selected for the university team, which in some ways is surprising since by this stage he was an accomplished cricketer. His skills with the bat and ball were appreciated across the Irish Sea, and during college vacations he turned out for Leinster.

In the summer of 1913, McNamara's chance came when he was one of a number of last-minute replacements brought into the Ireland cricket team to face Scotland in Edinburgh. In the game in July McNamara had an impressive debut, notching up 30 runs in the first innings and 21 in the second. He bowled four wicketless overs in Scotland's second innings, and despite his efforts and those of the other debutant, Arthur Bateman, the game ended in a draw.

McNamara clearly loved playing sport, and it is possible that he spent too much time outdoors rather than being indoors and studying with his books. He graduated with a fourth-class history degree.

He also left the hallowed halls of Oxford with some knowledge of the military, because like his international teammate Bateman he

was a member of his university's Officer Training Corps, an experience that would prove beneficial when he joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. He soon became an acting lieutenant, and in August 1916 he was attached to the 8th Battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers as they saw action on the Loos Salient.

He was killed on 17 August, and today his grave can be found at the Philosophe British Cemetery in Mazingarbe, which houses nearly 2,000 of the Great War dead. Born in Dublin in 1893, George Frederick McNamara was just twenty-three years old when he died on the battlefield.

His appearance on the international cricketing stage was brief. Like his Irish teammate Arthur Bateman, who played alongside him on a summer's day in Edinburgh in 1913, he had so much to live for.

In the two men's home city of Dublin at the Sir Patrick's Dun's Hospital Memorial, alongside the names of Arthur Bateman and Robbie Smyth, the name of another sportsman who died in the Great War can be found.

Like Bateman and Smyth, William Hallaran is another old boy of the hospital, and he also followed the paths of rugby, medicine and the army. He was the oldest Irish rugby international to lose his life during the First World War.

However, his life as a sportsman and a soldier was very different from the careers of Bateman and Smyth. William Hallaran was born on 19 April 1861 to Lizzie and Thomas Hallaran. He came from a church family: his father was the Archdeacon of Ardfelt, and had previously been the Canon of St Mary's in Limerick.

As a young man, William moved to Dublin to study medicine, and like many of his contemporaries he ended up playing for the college rugby team. Tall and skilful, he was an impressive halfback and was a useful addition to his university side. After a number of games he was surprisingly chosen to play for Ireland in the Four Nations match against Wales in 1884.

Hallaran's inclusion in the Irish side is a story in itself, and some mystery surrounds his selection and the way it was reported.

The championship involving the four Home Nations was in its

infancy, and it seems that Irish selectors had difficulty raising a team to send to Cardiff to play the Welsh match. A selection committee met in Dublin just days before the game and managed to get a list of names together. A report appeared the next day in the *Freeman's Journal*, and it lists the players who were selected. Three names in the report were surrounded by quotation marks, which suggested that they are not the real names of the players. One is listed in the printed team sheet as 'R. O. N. Hall'. A second player is reported as 'F. Brown', and another player is called 'H. G. Butler'. So why were these names surrounded by quotation marks? It could be that in an attempt by selectors to cover up the fact that they could not get a team together they invented a series of players to disguise their problems. We do know that 'R. O. N. Hall' was in fact William Hallaran, and he was part of the travelling party to Wales.

It has been suggested that Hallaran did not want his name published because he wanted to keep it secret from his father, who he thought would not approve of his rugby-playing son. On the Thursday before the game William Hallaran joined his teammates in Dublin, and they travelled by boat across to Wales. In Cardiff the Irish selection problems were stark. Ireland had only twelve men, which meant that they did not have enough players to take the field, so some quick thinking was needed. The IRFU's Honorary Secretary H.C. Cook decided that he would have to play, so he donned his boots. Then, in order to make up the numbers, Wales loaned two players to their visitors. It is thought that the two 'honorary Irishmen' were both Newport players called Purdon and Jordan. Ireland were captained by D. Moore, and on 12 April 1884 he led out onto the Cardiff Arms Park one of the oddest Irish teams ever seen.

Not surprisingly, Ireland's mixed team of debutants, including a Welshmen and an administrator, did not perform well.

In front of 5,000 spectators and in rather dull weather conditions it was the Welsh who made the most of their chances. Although Ireland got close to the home try line on a number of occasions, they failed to score a point, and the Welsh were victorious with two tries and a goal. The result was not unexpected, as the *News Letter* made

clear in a report that appeared the following Monday. The Belfast newspaper's correspondent stated, with no sense of irony:

> The teams on both sides had been considerably altered and it was generally anticipated that the Irishmen would be beaten as in the other two contests this year with England and Scotland.

The rather bizarre and most unfortunate Irish selection problem at Cardiff wasn't the only talking point from that year's Four Nations Championship. The game between England and Scotland provoked a bitter dispute when the Scots queried England's winning try in a row about the interpretation of the knock-on law.

After the game the disagreement got worse, and the two teams did not meet the next season. In an attempt to find a solution Irish rugby officials proposed the establishment of an International Board that could examine disputes. The move was accepted, and the board came into being in 1886.

William Hallaran's experience of international rugby was confined to that April afternoon in Cardiff, and he would never appear on an Irish selection list again, either under his own name or under a pseudonym.

Newly qualified as a doctor, he left Dublin behind and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, and over the next decade would see much action overseas. He served in Burma, India and Africa, and was involved in the relief of Kimberley. He became a surgeon and slowly worked his way up the ranks, becoming a major in the Medical Corps in 1899, and later, in 1912, he was made a lieutenant colonel. In 1915 he was promoted again and was made a colonel.

In 1917, as trench warfare waged across Europe, Hallaran's military work with the Medical Corps took him to a different environment. He was working as Director of Medical Services in the Indian city Jabalpur when he fell ill on 23 January and died. He was fifty-five years old, and was married to a woman from South Africa.

William Hallaran's military career was impressive, and his regular

promotions are a testament to his leadership and soldiering skills. He also used his medical ability well, and saw service in some of the most important theatres of war in the late 1800s and early 1900s. His sporting career was brief and was largely confined to club rugby. On the international stage he had little opportunity to shine, and perhaps he will be best remembered for being a member of one of the strangest collections of players ever to don an Irish jersey.

Like William Hallaran, army medic Ernest Deane only got one opportunity to wear the colours of his country. He was selected to play for Ireland against England at Lansdowne Road in 1909. It was the only cap for the talented winger, who was a formidable all-round sportsman who enjoyed golf, tennis, shooting and fishing.

Ernest Cotton Deane was born on 4 May 1887 in Limerick to Thomas and Aileen Deane, who came from Kingstown in County Dublin. Thomas Deane was a bank manager, and he and his wife had five children – four boys and a girl.

Ernest went to the nearby Corrig School, and from a very young age it was clear that he was going to excel in sport. The school had a good reputation for rugby, and after the teachers saw him play Deane was selected as captain. This began a love affair with the game that would stay with him for the rest of his life. Deane's other great love was medicine, so it was no surprise that he opted to go to the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin.

At this stage Deane also joined Monkstown Rugby Club, and after a period there it was only natural that he was asked to be club captain. In his early twenties much of his free time was spent either studying or playing rugby, and his services as a speedy wing three-quarter were often in demand. He also turned out for Adelaide Hospital, where he was house surgeon, and he played games in the Dublin Hospitals Cup, which was a well-established competitive tournament.

Deane was a fast athlete and had a natural sporting ability, so it was only a matter of time before the Irish selectors approached him to play international rugby. Much work had been done at Lansdowne Road, and the ground was in perfect condition for the encounter

with England on 13 February 1909. The facilities met with the approval of one visiting journalist, who wrote:

> No England v Ireland match has been played in circumstances which better enabled men to give of their best. [...]The playing area has been thoroughly drained and re-laid and instead of the slime and mud in which players used to flounder there was today a firm green turf.

Before the game, Deane and his teammates posed for the official photograph that is traditionally taken minutes before kick-off. In the picture, Deane can be seen standing on the far left of the group looking pensive, very young, and most probably feeling apprehensive.

Sadly, his debut was not the success he would have hoped for. England were much stronger than Ireland, and even though the Irish had talented players like the legendary J. C. Parke and Harry Thrift, they were no match for an English back line full of stars like Edgar Mobbs and A. C. Palmer.

Even Ireland's pack had an off day. As one correspondent noted:

> We had the same fiery rushes of the Irish forwards we have known of old, but there was a pack of forwards up against them who could hold them and finally outplay them.

Mobbs and Palmer were the playmakers, and together they got all the English points in a game that ended 11–5 to England, with J. C. Parke scoring Ireland's only try of the game.

Deane's international career was short-lived, and later that year he broke his leg playing in a game, which meant that he had to retire from the sport completely. He qualified as a doctor and began working at the Adelaide Hospital, but his heart was set on a military career and he went to Sandhurst, and later joined the Royal Army

Medical Corps as a lieutenant in July 1911.

Life in the army for the young doctor was certainly not dull, and Deane was posted overseas in October 1913 and served in Burma and was stationed at Meerut when the war broke out in Europe. In September 1914 he was sent to France, serving first with the 20th Field Ambulance, and then he transferred to the 2nd Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment. The army life clearly suited him, and his attitude and demeanour impressed his superiors, who promoted him in 1915 to the rank of captain.

In May he suffered a bout of ill health and contracted German measles, which meant that he was hospitalised for a number of days. By the late summer he was back in service in the thick of the action, and often under the intensity of German fire he had to tend to wounded and dying comrades.

On an August evening in 1915 he was in the front line near Fauquissart, and around 10 p.m. a German bomb attack struck a number of soldiers who were on patrol. Without thinking, or having any knowledge of the strength of the enemy's firepower, Deane leapt over the parapet and ran to the aid of four wounded men. He then went back to get some stretchers, and under fire was able to bring the men to safety. Ernest Deane had previously been Mentioned in Despatches for his acts of bravery, and his move to rescue the four wounded soldiers resulted in the award of the Military Cross.

Deane's superiors were well aware of his past acts of courage, and noted that 'This is not the first time that Captain Deane's gallantry under fire has been brought to notice.' Deane's colonel, who was in charge of the 2nd Leicesters, commented that 'An honour was never better deserved or more gallantly won.'

A month later, in September 1915, in the area of Neuve Chapelle, Deane found himself once again under enemy fire as he tried to rescue and attend to wounded comrades.

The operation to seize German territory had begun in the early hours of Saturday 25 September, and men from Deane's battalion climbed out of their trenches and advanced towards the enemy lines in a series of groups. The Germans used mustard gas, and within

minutes men from the Leicestershires were struck down gasping for air.

A number of men had become injured out in the open in no man's land close to the German wire, and they were in need of medical attention. Characteristically, Deane went out to assist them, and as he made his way back to the British trenches he was shot in the head by a German sniper. He died instantaneously and his body was recovered by his comrades, who brought him back to the British lines.

Ernest Deane was killed in an operation that saw the near destruction of entire battalions. By October 1915 nearly 100,000 British and French troops had died. Even though Ernest Deane's body was recovered, the news clearly did not reach the army's hierarchy, and in the days that followed there was some confusion about what exactly had happened to his body.

On 29 September, a telegram from the War Office in London arrived at the Deane family home, which was at Rathkeale in County Limerick. It stated that Ernest was 'reported missing' and said any further news would be 'telegraphed as soon as received'.

The confusing picture about Ernest's precise whereabouts must have caused unbearable agony to the Deane family. By the time the telegram had arrived in Ireland, Ernest Deane had been buried in France by his comrades. An officer contacted Ernest's parents to express his sympathy and explain how he had died. He wrote:

> He was the most gallant fellow I have ever met and we all loved him in the regiment, both officers and men. We had a big battle on the 25th and your son went out to help some wounded and got killed. I believe his death was instantaneous, but I am not sure as I was wounded myself, and had to be taken back. His body was recovered and buried by our Padre and I will give you the exact location of the cemetery afterwards.

Ernest Deane was buried the day after he died in the cemetery at Rue-du-Bacquerot as his comrades watched on. A number of his friends took time to write to his parents. One told them:

> Your son was straight, fearless, indefatigable, always cheery and never anything else but conscientious and gallant. I was present at his funeral in the cemetery in Rue-du-Bacquerot on Sunday, the 26th inst. – the day after he died gloriously.

A senior chaplain also wrote to Mr and Mrs Deane and said he recalled:

> ... how keen and pleased the dear lad was when he first received orders to proceed to the front. I know the regiment misses him dreadfully.

The letters meant that the Deane family at least knew what had happened to Ernest, and it may have been of some comfort to know where he was buried, even though the War Office had still not officially told them.

In December 1915, some three months after he was buried, word finally came from London officially confirming the news of Ernest's final resting place. The War Office finally wrote to Thomas Deane to say that Ernest had been buried at the Rue-du-Bacquerot military cemetery. Thomas Deane politely wrote back thanking the officials for their note, but informing them that the colonel of the 2nd Leicester Regiment and the chaplain had already given him the details of Ernest's burial.

Ernest's death resulted in much correspondence for his parents to deal with. Most of it was routine and painful, and sometimes it was poignant. In October 1915, just as his family were trying to take in the news of his disappearance, word came through that his bravery on the battlefield near Farquissart back in May had resulted in the award of a Military Cross. Ernest Deane was the second Irish

international rugby player to be killed in action during the Great War. He died after thirty-four-year-old Basil Maclear lost his life some four months earlier at Wieltje near Ypres in May 1915.

After the war, Ernest Deane was commemorated on a series of Great War memorials. His name can be seen in the chapel at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, and on a commemorative plaque in Dublin at the site of the former Adelaide Hospital where he practised before he joined the army. Ernest Deane shared much in common with the other Irish medics who perished in the Great War. Outside of their families, Arthur Cyril Bateman, Robbie Smyth and William Hallaran had three loves: the army, medicine and sport. They all approached life at the front line with a positive attitude that won friends and plaudits. Each displayed leadership and courage, and as soldiers they knew much about the importance of camaraderie and teamwork – life skills they used in the heat of battle, but had first learnt on the playing fields of Ireland.

14 A Century On

'Their sacrifice was for the greater good of us all.'

– Danny Murphy, Ulster GAA Secretary, 2014.

The Great Hall at Queen's University in Belfast is an imposing place with handsome wood panelling, chandeliers, tall windows, a stone fireplace and memorial plaques. It also houses the college's impressive art collection, and the walls are dominated with portraits of leading academics, poets and playwrights. It is a historic venue, and on an October evening in 2014 the room was packed with a cross-community audience that included politicians from Dublin and Belfast. Also seated in the hall were sportsmen and women, historians and leaders from civic society. They had all been invited to hear how the GAA intended to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War.

With a series of anniversaries on the horizon, including the

centenary of the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme, GAA officials were conscious of the sensitivity of the occasion.

With this in mind, Ulster GAA Secretary Danny Murphy said that when it came to marking the role GAA members played in the British Army during the Great War, his organisation had failed to 'recognise the sacrifice' and that it was now time to mark that 'their sacrifice was for the greater good of us all'.

Sinn Féin's Carál Ní Chuilin, the Minister for Sport in the Northern Ireland Executive, told the gathering the GAA's project was part of a wider 'opportunity to gain a better understanding of our shared past'.

The initiative by Ireland's largest sporting body broke new ground, and is an indicator of how attitudes towards remembering the Great War dead have changed on the island of Ireland in the past two decades.

The story of GAA players who joined the British Army a century ago is part of a wider narrative that saw 200,000 Irishmen fight in the Great War. How Ireland's part in the conflict should be commemorated and remembered has been the subject of much political debate and academic investigation.

For much of the twentieth century the Irish role in the war was hidden and ignored by the authorities in Dublin. It is often referred to as 'national amnesia' but, as the historian Professor Keith Jeffery has pointed out, that was not always the case. Parades commemorating the Irish Great War sacrifice did take place in the 1920s, and they were well attended. In 1924, 20,000 veterans marched in Dublin, and in the same year nearly half a million poppies were sold in the city. Despite such public displays, opinion was clearly divided about the way in which Ireland should mark the Great War. Nationalists often felt uncomfortable with commemorations because they included symbols of 'Britishness', and some felt that the deaths of Irishmen were being used to promote the interests of the Empire.

For many veterans post-war Ireland was a confusing place, and some ex-soldiers wanted to forget their experiences rather than

remember them. The political atmosphere changed with the electoral success of Sinn Féin, and the ongoing battle for independence meant that many former servicemen were uncomfortable with what they saw as the trappings of Empire. Some returning soldiers felt they had fought the wrong war against the wrong enemy, and began to question whether the British government was in fact committed to introducing Home Rule.

After the Great War, Stephen Gwynn, an Irish Party MP who fought with the Connaught Rangers, wrote:

> ... when the time came to rejoice over the war's ending was there anything more tragic than the position of men who had gone out in their thousands for the sake of Ireland to confront the greatest military power ever known in history, who had fought the war and won the war, and who looked at each other with doubtful eyes.

In contrast, many Unionists suggested that it was their sacrifice at places like the Somme that secured the link with Britain and ultimately helped to create Northern Ireland. Subsequently, the Great War experience was seen by some as exclusive to one section of society, and for many years in the Republic of Ireland, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, there was little or no appreciation of the Irish contribution to the First World War. For decades the stories of Irishmen in the war lay hidden from public view.

It was only in the 1980s and 1990s that Ireland's role in the conflict was given prominence. The Loyalist and Republican ceasefires and the resulting peace process created an atmosphere where communities across the island felt comfortable with exploring their shared history.

In 1998, on a November day, Irish President Mary McAleese and the Queen unveiled the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines in Belgium. It was there in the mud in 1917 that men from the 16th Irish Division fought alongside their comrades in the 36th Ulster

Division. In the words of President McAleese, the monument was built to bear witness to the 'redeeming of the memory' of those Irishmen who died during the Great War.

Some joined up because their friends volunteered, others stepped forward for a bit of adventure, some enlisted out of loyalty and duty, and others simply went to war because of the promise of a regular job. Whatever their motivation, the deaths of around 35,000 men devastated every single county in Ireland. Fathers, brothers, uncles, sons and husbands were all lost in a conflict that was originally meant to last for weeks rather than years. When the war finally ended, those who were lucky enough to survive returned to a changed Ireland. In 1918 the old certainties were gone, the country was about to change, and would soon embark on a war of its own. Today, a century on, the legacy of the Great War can still be felt in communities right across the island.

In October 2014 at the Great Hall at Queen's University in Belfast, Sean Sherlock, an Irish Minister of State, helped to launch the GAA's drive to uncover the names of players who fought in the First World War. The TD told the audience that he hoped that the families of the men would eventually feel that 'their history is our history'.

This book tells the stories of forty Irish sportsmen who died in the Great War. When the conflict began, some were at the peak of their sporting careers, whilst others had retired from competitive action by the time they had enlisted. A large number of those who died were seasoned internationals at the height of their fame, whilst others were just beginning to make a name for themselves. Each story provides a fascinating snapshot of an Irish sporting life, and together they bring a new dimension to Ireland's role in the Great War.

The men chronicled in *Ireland's Call* scored tries and goals, broke records, hit winning runs and entertained crowds. They were history-makers, and many pioneered their respective codes as organised sport took hold across Ireland. They found themselves at the centre of one of the bloodiest conflicts mankind has ever witnessed. They were not flawless as sportsmen or soldiers, and their

wartime experiences should not be romanticised. Had they survived the war they would have been well placed to put on record their opinion of the horror of places like Ypres, the Somme and Gallipoli. In the aftermath of the Great War their deaths were reported, and today on stone memorials across the world you will find their names in places like South Africa, Israel, Greece and India.

Once they were feted as Ireland's sporting elite, but in the decades since they answered the call to arms they became a forgotten generation.

A century on, their history is now our history.

Sportsmen chronicled in *Ireland's Call*

Ireland Rugby Internationals

Basil Maclear Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 24 May 1915
Ernest Deane Royal Army Medical Corps Died 25 September 1915
Vincent McNamara Royal Engineers Died 29 November 1915
Robert Burgess Royal Engineers Died 9 December 1915
Robbie Smyth Royal Army Medical Corps Died 5 April 1916
William Hallaran Royal Army Medical Corps Died 23 January 1917
Jasper Brett Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 4 February 1917
Albert Stewart Machine Gun Corps Died 4 October 1917
Alfred Taylor Royal Army Medical Corps Died 31 July 1917
William Edwards Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 29 December 1917
George McAllan South African Medical Corps Died 4 December 1918
William Beatty Royal Army Medical Corps Died 10 February 1919

New Zealand Rugby International

Dave Gallaher Auckland Regiment Died 4 October 1917

GAA Players

Paddy Corey Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Died 22 July 1915
Jimmy Rossiter Irish Guards Died 21 October 1915
William Manning Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 27 March 1918

Ireland Hockey Internationals

William Ball Royal Army Medical Corps Died 26 September 1914
George Karney Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 16 August 1915

Harold Simms Royal Garrison Artillery Died 2 September 1916
Robert Morrison Cheshire Regiment Died 13 November 1916
Edmund Smyth Royal Irish Rifles Died 3 December 1917
Falkiner Hewson Royal Army Medical Corps Died October 1918

Scotland Hockey International

John George Anderson Royal Army Medical Corps Died March 1918

Irish International Athletes

Charles Fausset Royal Irish Regiment Died 3 May 1915
George Grant Duggan Royal Irish Fusiliers Died 16 August 1915
Hedley Craig Royal Flying Corps Died 18 April 1917
Paddy Roche King George Own Sappers Died 25 August 1917

Irish International Footballers

Barney Donaghey Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Died 1 July 1916
Hiriam McKee Canadian Infantry Died 29 November 1916
Harold Sloan Royal Garrison Artillery Died 22 January 1917
Dick Moore Royal Irish Fusiliers Died 29 October 1918

Irish International Golfer

Michael Moran Royal Irish Regiment Died 10 April 1918

Irish Cricket Internationals

Charles Trueman Manchester Regiment Died 26 August 1914
Henry Etlinger Bhopal Infantry Died 27 April 1915
Joseph Lynch Yorkshire Regiment Died 25 September 1915
James Ryan Liverpool Regiment Died 25 September 1915
Frank Browning IRFU Volunteer Corps Died 26 April 1916
George McNamara Royal Dublin Fusiliers Died 17 August 1916
Robert Gregory Royal Flying Corps Died 23 January 1918
Arthur Cyril Bateman Royal Army Medical Corps Died 28 March 1918

Notes and Sources

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Chapter 2 Crossing the Line

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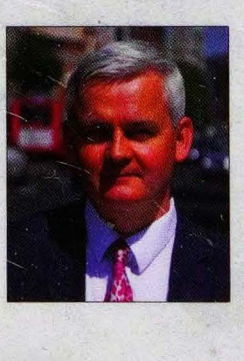

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